

# FACT SHEET: BEEF CHOICES

<b>Beef Choices</b>	The approximately 800,000 beef producers throughout the United States offer a variety of beef choices to meet the changing lifestyles and nutritional needs of consumers. Beef producers have adapted their practices to provide consumers with the grain-fed, grass-finished, certified organic or natural beef they desire. While each kind of beef offers specific value to consumers, all beef shares several common denominators including nutrition and safety.
<b>Nutritional Value of Beef</b>	<p>U.S. beef is leaner than ever and is a premier naturally nutrient-rich food, helping consumers get more nutrition from their calories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29 cuts of beef (including 15 of the 20 of the most popular cuts) meet government guidelines for lean, such as the tenderloin, sirloin and 95 percent lean ground beef.</li> <li>• Beef has eight times more vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, six times more zinc and two and a half times more iron than a skinless chicken breast.</li> </ul>
<b>Beef Safety</b>	All beef is subject to the stringent government regulations and inspection procedures that ensure safety. All cattle are inspected by a public health veterinarian before entering the packing facility and those with any signs of illness are condemned.
<b>Grain-fed Beef</b>	<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grain-fed beef is the most widely produced kind of beef by the approximately 800,000 beef producers across the United States.</li> </ul> <p><i>Production:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grain-fed cattle spend most of their lives eating grass in pastures, they then move on to a feedlot where they eat a high-energy grain diet for three to six months.</li> </ul>
<b>Grass-finished Beef</b>	<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All beef that is grass-fed as cattle spend the majority of their lives eating grass in pastures. However, grass-finished beef comes from cattle that have been raised solely on pasture their entire lives.</li> </ul> <p><i>Production:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grass-finished cattle may be entered into the Certified Organic Program and must adhere to the same guidelines. However, grass-finished beef is not necessarily Certified Organic Beef as these cattle may be given FDA-approved antibiotics and/or growth promotants.</li> </ul>
<b>Certified Organic Beef</b>	<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified organic beef must meet U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program requirements. The Organic Foods Production Act, effective October 2002, sets USDA standards for all food labeled organic (<a href="http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/FactSheets/ProdHandE.html">http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/FactSheets/ProdHandE.html</a>). For beef, this means:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cattle must be fed 100 percent organic feed, but may be provided certain vitamin and mineral supplements.</li> <li>• Organically raised cattle may not be given hormones to promote growth or antibiotics for any reason. However, if an animal is sick, the animal cannot be denied treatment to ensure its health; any animal that is treated with antibiotics is taken out of the National Organic Program.</li> <li>• All organically raised cattle must have access to pasture, but practically all cattle, regardless of how they are raised, meet this requirement.</li> <li>• Organic beef must be certified through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Cattle must be raised under organic management from the last third of gestation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Production:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both grass-finished and grain-finished beef can qualify as organic as long as the cattle are produced according to organic standards.</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Beef</b>	<p><i>What is it?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By definition, most beef is natural. According to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), "natural" may be used on a label for meat if:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the product does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring, coloring ingredient, or chemical preservative or any other artificial or synthetic ingredient; and</li> <li>• the product and its ingredients are not more than minimally processed (FSIS Directive 7220.1 Policy Memo 55 "Natural Claims").</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Production:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The definition of "natural" does not consider the way in which animals were raised and or what they were fed so natural beef can be grain-fed, grass-finished or organic as long as it's minimally processed and contains no additives.</li> <li>• Some beef products may be labeled "natural" based on a marketer's production specifications, such as "raised without growth promotants and antibiotics."</li> </ul>

