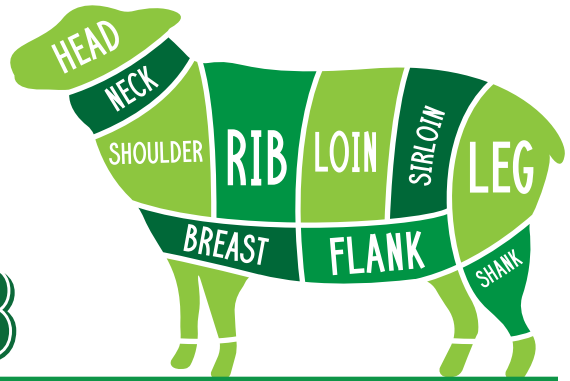


# How to Select the Best LAMB



## HOW TO SELECT:

- Lamb comes from a sheep under 1 year old, most often around 9-10 months of age. Mutton is from a sheep over 1 year old. Lamb tends to be more tender and milder in taste compared to mutton. Mutton has a richer and stronger flavor and is tougher compared to lamb, but is typically less expensive.
- Lamb meat should appear pink to dark red in color and have pink bones and white marbling. Mutton should appear deep red in color with white bones and marbling. Both should be firm in texture.
- Look for packages that are cool to the touch and do not exhibit any damage or wear.
- Check the dates on the package to ensure you buy fresh

## COOKING:

- The minimum safe cooking temperature for lamb and mutton is an internal temperature of 145°F with a three-minute rest time.<sup>1</sup>
- Washing meat before cooking is not recommended.<sup>1</sup>

## NUTRITION:

- Lamb and mutton are excellent sources of Vitamin B12, niacin, zinc, selenium, and protein.
- One serving of lamb or mutton is 3 ounces or roughly the size of a deck of cards.<sup>1</sup>

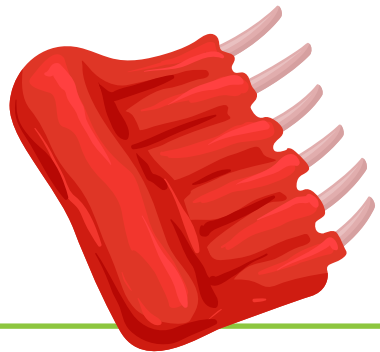
## STORAGE:

- Most sealed, raw lamb and mutton products can be safely kept in the refrigerator for 3-5 days after purchase. Raw ground lamb that is sealed tightly can be kept in the refrigerator for 1-2 days after purchase.<sup>1</sup>
- Cooked lamb and mutton products can be safely stored in the refrigerator for 3-4 days after preparation.<sup>1</sup>
- Lamb and mutton products freeze well. Products can be frozen in their original packaging but should be transferred to airtight packaging to preserve quality. Raw lamb and mutton products generally keep well in the freezer for up to 6 months. Ground lamb is best kept in the freezer for up to 3 months. Cooked lamb and mutton products should be used within 3 months.<sup>1</sup>
- Always thaw meat in the refrigerator, microwave, or immersed in cold water.<sup>1</sup>



## LABELS YOU MIGHT NOTICE:

- **Natural:** Generally recognized as a product containing no artificial ingredients, added color, or chemical preservatives, and is only minimally processed (processed so the product is not fundamentally changed).<sup>1</sup>
- **Organic:** Identifies practices employed while raising or growing the product. In organic production, animals are raised in living conditions freely accommodating their natural behaviors (like the ability to graze on pasture), fed 100% organic feed and forage, and not administered antibiotics or hormones at any point during the animal's lifetime. The organic label does not indicate that the product has safety, quality, or nutritional attributes that are any higher than conventionally raised products.<sup>1</sup>
- **Grain-fed/Grain-finished:** Sheep spend most of their lives eating grass and forage in pastures but are free to eat grain (such as corn), as well as hay and forages as they reach maturity.
- **Grass-fed/Grass-finished:** Sheep spend their entire lives grazing and eating from pastures. Supplemental feed may include hay and forages when grass is not as readily available. Grass-fed sheep are never offered grain as part of their diet.
- **Antibiotic-free:** All lamb and mutton in the grocery store is antibiotic-free. When antibiotics are used, withdrawal periods are observed that allow ample time for the antibiotic to completely exit the animal's system after it was last administered.<sup>2</sup>
- **Raised without Antibiotics:** While no lamb or mutton in the grocery store contains antibiotics, this label denotes that no antibiotics were used to treat illnesses during the animal's lifetime.
- **Gluten-free:** There is no gluten (a grain product) in lamb or mutton, except for instances where the meat may be pre-seasoned or contain a marinade.
- **Non-GMO:** There is no GMO lamb or mutton. Genetic modification is a technique applied to plant breeding.
- **Raised without Hormones/No Added Hormones:** All animals naturally have hormones, therefore all lamb and mutton will naturally contain a small amount of hormones. These labels are indicators that the sheep were raised with no supplemental hormones. Supplemental hormones are sometimes used with sheep to help promote healthy growth and are regulated by the FDA and USDA. Research on the effects of using hormones in livestock production have not found any impact on human health.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Source: United States Department of Agriculture

<sup>2</sup> Source: United States Food and Drug Administration

<sup>3</sup> Source: Stewart, L. 2013. Implanting beef cattle. Univ. of Georgia. Bulletin 1302