Custom Beef Cut and Processing

Our USDA Meat Processors provide A LOT of options for our customers, most are obvious, though some options can be very confusing! We are here to walk you through it so that you can make the absolute best use of your custom beef for your household's needs.

Some basic terms to get your Order started:

Whole – means that you are committed to buying the entire steer, regardless of how big or little it may end up!

Half – means that are committed to buying half of the steer (divided equally between the left/right side) – so will typically end of with half of what is excepted from the Whole steer.

Quarter – means that you are committed to buying ¼ of the steer, which is where things get trickier in the processing area; thus the extra cost per lbs. for Quarter over Half/Whole costs. Each steer has Four Separate Cut possibilities that yield different of package beef groups (below) AND your choice has to fit in with the other 3 people that bought the *other* quarters. United/Harmonic choices – never easy!! Luckily you still have flexibility of how to processing your own quarter, so still have lots of choices to make for your own customization beyond cut.

Hot/Hanging Weight**:** The weight of your animal hanging on the rail, after slaughter. This is the weight you are charged for, not live weight. We do not weigh animals prior to slaughter.

Dry Age**:** Hanging your carcass in a controlled temperature to increase tenderness. Specie and manner in which it was fed all contribute to the recommended times. Please consult our butchers for their suggestions.

Yield**:** The amount of meat you take home from your animal. This will vary greatly on specific, style of cut, fat content and weight of animal.

How much beef is in a Whole steer?

Our goal is to pull steers out of the finishing process at about 1,500 lbs. with the expectation that 30-40% of the steer will result in packaged beef. Only a few things affect the live weight of the steer, which we carefully control in our finishing process, but a few things can affect the package weight; which will we explain below.

Example – 1,500 lbs steer should yield 450-600lbs of packaged beef. The difference is yield is largely determined by the customer's choices in how to package the beef;

1. how long to hang the caress?
2. how lean do you want the cuts?
3. Bone-in or bone out cuts?
4. Rib, Grill and Stew cuts vs. hamburger?
5. More steaks vs larger roasts?

A Whole beef, will need roughly 14 cubic feet of freezer space, Half needs 7 cubic feet and a Quarter about 4 cubic feet.

In general, are % of cut types typically chosen from a Whole beef:

- 35% lean trim, or ground beef
- 20% round roasts and steaks
- 20% chuck roasts and steaks
- 15% rib and loin steaks
- 10% other cuts (brisket, flank, short ribs, skirt steak)

*Fun calculator to help plan your beef yield – mind you it's an ESTIMATE!! Our beef is custom, so does not receive a USDA Yield (only retail markets, like butcher shops/grocery stores have these,) though it's our goal to get our steers in the Yield Grade 4-5; which is LOTS of external fat and marbling within the meat.

http://beefcutoutcalculator.agsci.colostate.edu/

Cut for a Side of Beef - https://www.augustusranch.com/blog/beef-cuts-explained

How the price per lbs. determined?

Steers are typically about 35-40% inedible, (after all you can't eat the hid!) so customers are charged based on the Hanging Weight of the steer rather than he weighed when leaving the finishing process.

Example – a 1,500 lb live steer should result in a carcass 850-900 lbs, which is his Hanging Weight. Thus Hanging Weight of 850lbs x $4 = $3,400 for a Whole packaged beef.

What factors to consider before buying a Whole, a Half or a Quarter of packaged beef?

Consider your family's typical weekly/monthly menu and your grocery costs for retail for beef and meat.

Consider your family's health needs and diet plans over the next few months – more homemade meals, more hormone-free meat, more lean meats or more fat (Keto, Paleo, South Beach, Atkins).

Consider the current market costs for meat and how much freezer space you have to store the meat.

Consider if reorganizing your family menu to mostly beef is possible; as this will reduce spending on other meat and freezer space needs – i.e. more beef tacos than grilled chicken strips, more beef stews over pork chops, etc…

Can I "go-in" with others, to buy a Whole beef and split up the cuts myself?

Use these handy tools to help you gather some data:

Play around with the Beef Cut-Out Calculator to get an idea of the type and sizes of cuts from a Whole beef:
http://beefcutoutcalculator.agsci.colostate.edu/

Check out the Retail pricing of ground beef tracked by the US Bureau of Labor and Statistics for a baseline of custom beef costs compared to retail costs.
https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/APU0000703112

Check out Wholesale Pricing (not retail) of Choice Grade Beef tracked by the Beef Council
https://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/sales-data/wholesale-price-update

> While the price per pound for a Whole custom beef is more than the typical cost for ground meat, it's also ½ the cost of roasts and 1/3 the cost of steak – purchasing the Whole beef is MAJOR savings to any family budget.

The American Beef Counsel has put together these awesome cut sheets so that our customers can quickly reference visually the cuts offered in Custom Beef with what's available at your Butcher's display case. They even give you handy cooking icons for the best methods of preparing the cuts (slow cooking, oven roasting, grill, etc…) These chart ought to help you figure out your cut needs when considering your household's menu preferences.

If you're still not sure on what to choose – their online guide can give you some tips, or we have help you as well. https://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/cuts