Guide to Buying Meat in Bulk Directly From Farms and Ranches

How Much Should I Buy?
If you have storage space and the funds to purchase upfront, buying meat in bulk can be a worthwhile way to buy from a farmer or rancher you trust. But, it does require a little planning. First, think about how much meat your household likely consumes in one year using our simple guide.

\[
\text{Weekly consumption} = \text{Number of meat eaters} \times \text{average portion size} \times \text{meals per week}
\]

\[
\text{Yearly consumption} = \text{Weekly consumption} \times 52 \text{ (weeks in a year)}
\]

Which Share Is Right For Me?
Then, think about the species (beef, pork or lamb, etc.) that you consume the most of, and how much of your yearly meat consumption you’d like to try purchasing in bulk.

Ask your farmer or rancher what share sizes are available—you can always try a smaller share at first and see if it works with the way you and your family cook. Remember that buying in bulk means you’ll get a variety of cuts from each animal. You may not be used to cooking with some of these cuts. We’ll get into that more in the next section.

Bulk Buying Basics: Yields for Beef, Pork and Lamb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIES SHARE</th>
<th>WHOLE BEEF</th>
<th>1/2 BEEF</th>
<th>1/4 BEEF</th>
<th>WHOLE HOG</th>
<th>1/2 HOG</th>
<th>WHOLE LAMB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live weight</td>
<td>900–1300 lbs</td>
<td>230–325 lbs</td>
<td>100–150 lbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging (carcass)</td>
<td>550–800 lbs</td>
<td>2.75–400 lbs</td>
<td>140–200 lbs</td>
<td>165–230 lbs</td>
<td>82–115 lbs</td>
<td>50–75 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edible meat yield</td>
<td>300–500 lbs</td>
<td>150–250 lbs</td>
<td>75–125 lbs</td>
<td>110–150 lbs</td>
<td>55–75 lbs</td>
<td>40–65 lbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These numbers will vary depending on production practices and breeds.
What Will I Get?
The exact cuts you’ll receive in a farm-direct bulk buy will depend on your farmer or rancher, your butcher, and what you request. Check out our graphic for a general idea.

How will this work, and what will it cost me?
When buying meat in bulk, you're buying a "share" of a live animal. You will pay two parties: the farmer or rancher and the butcher.

The farmer or rancher will charge you based on the weight of the animal after slaughter (aka “hanging” or “carcass” weight), which includes bones and fat that will be trimmed away later.

The butcher will charge you a "slaughter fee" and a “cut-and-wrap” fee. You’ll fill out a “cut sheet,” which tells the butcher which cuts you prefer, like steaks, roasts, bone-in or boneless, ground, etc. The more specific your requests, the higher the fee.
Where Do I Store All This Meat?

For some shares, you’ll be able to store the meat in a regular-sized freezer in your home fridge. For larger shares, you might want to purchase another freezer. These freezers can often be purchased used, for a fair price, if you’re on the lookout.

How Do I Cook All This?

Great question! Check out the Cook It section on the Good Meat Breakdown website for plenty of tips: www.goodmeatbreakdown.org