Guide to Buying Meat in Bulk Directly From Farms and Ranches

Pork

Why Buy in Bulk?
If you have storage space and the funds to purchase upfront, buying meat in bulk (often in the form of livestock “shares”) can be a rewarding, cost-effective way to buy from a farmer or rancher you trust. It allows you to try cuts you might not otherwise get, and saves you a bunch of trips to the butcher. But, it does require a little planning.

How Much Should I Buy?
First, you’ll need to think about how much meat your household consumes in order to find the right size share. To do so, use our simple guide.

Number of meat eaters x average portion size x meals per week = your weekly consumption
Weekly consumption x 52 (weeks in a year) = your yearly consumption

Which Pork Share is Right For Me?
So you’ve settled on buying a pork share from a local farmer or rancher. Now you need to decide which share to buy. Bulk pork is typically sold as a whole or half hog.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PORK SHARE</th>
<th>LIVE WEIGHT</th>
<th>WHOLE HOG</th>
<th>1/2 HOG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanging (carcass) weight</td>
<td>165–230 lbs</td>
<td>82–115 lbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edible meat yield</td>
<td>110–150 lbs</td>
<td>55–75 lbs</td>
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</tbody>
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*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 the graphics on this page for a general idea.

Approximate Meat Yield from 1/2 of a Hog

- **Shoulder**: 14 lbs
  - Shoulder Chops
  - Boston Butt Roast
  - Picnic Roast

- **Loin**: 15 lbs
  - Rib Chops
  - Loin Chops

- **Ham**: 13 lbs
  - Sirloin Chops
  - Kabobs
  - Cutlets
  - Ham Roasts

- **Belly**: 10 lbs
  - Bacon
  - Spare Ribs

- **Other**: 10 lbs
  - Ham Hocks
  - Lord Jowls

- **Ground**: 6 lbs

*These numbers will vary depending on production practices and breeds.

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 Much Space Is Needed?

- ≈55–75 lbs of meat
- Less than 1/2 of a 12 cu.ft upright freezer
- 4.5 cu.ft.
- 2/3 of a standard home freezer
  - 4.5 cu.ft.
- 1/3 of a 12 cu.ft chest freezer
  - 3.5 cu.ft.
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.

How Do I Cook All of This?

Great question! Buying meat in bulk normally means getting some cuts you’re unfamiliar with, and that’s part of the fun.

Here’s the gist. Cuts generally fall into two categories: tender and quick-cooking and tougher and slow-cooking. Which category a cut falls into depends on where the muscle is on the animal and how much the animal used it. Remember, all cuts will taste delicious if you know how to cook them. Knowing just a bit about each cut will help you to improvise in the kitchen and get creative. The cheat sheet on this page might be all you need. For more in-depth tips, check out www.goodmeatbreakdown.org.

TENDER
- LOIN
- HAM
- RIBS
- SHOULDER
- BELLY
- JOWL

TOUGH
- BUTT

WSDA’s Regional Markets Meat & Poultry Assistance Program works to strengthen regional meat supply chains by providing support to small farms, ranches and meat processors in Washington. agr.wa.gov/farmfoodbiz

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