

GROUND BEEF CONSUMER TIPS



SMART SHOPPING HOW MUCH TO BUY?

One pound of ground beef will provide 12 ounces of cooked beef — four 3-ounce cooked servings or patties; about 2 cups cooked crumbles.

COLOR: Fresh ground beef goes through a number of color changes during its shelf life. These changes are normal and the ground beef remains perfectly wholesome and safe to eat if purchased by the “sell by” date on the label. When exposed to oxygen, the color of beef will turn from dark red to a bright red. This explains why a package of ground beef may appear bright red on the surface, where it is exposed to oxygen through the permeable plastic wrap, while the interior remains purplish-red.

STORAGE:

- Ground beef is more perishable than steaks and roasts. This shorter shelf life is a result of the increased surface area that is created and exposed when beef is ground.
- Refrigerate ground beef in the coldest section of the refrigerator. Use it within 1 to 2 days.
- Freeze any ground beef that will not be used within 2 days. Label and date frozen ground beef and use it within 3 to 4 months.
- To freeze ground beef patties conveniently: Shape patties and place in a single layer on a tray lined with waxed paper. Freeze just until firm, then immediately wrap and freeze completely. Patties can be tightly wrapped individually or grouped together in freezer bags.



COOKING TIPS

- **HANDLE GROUND BEEF GENTLY.** The secret to moist flavorful burgers, meatloaves and meatballs is to mix lightly. Overmixing will result in a firm, compact texture after cooking.
- **DON'T PRESS OR PIERCE PATTIES DURING COOKING.** Flavorful juices can be lost, resulting in dry burgers.
- **BRUSH BROWN OR RED SAUCES ONTO GROUND BEEF AFTER COOKING,** rather than mixing them into raw beef. Ketchup, Worcestershire, soy and BBQ sauces can change the color of ground beef, making it difficult to judge doneness by appearance.
- **SEASON PATTIES AND CRUMBLES WITH SALT AFTER COOKING.** Salt added before cooking draws out moisture and inhibits browning.
- **SAVE TIME WHEN COOKING MEATBALLS.** Bake in a 350°F oven, until no longer pink in the center and the juices show no pink color, instead of browning in a skillet.

FOOD SAFETY:

- **DEFROST GROUND BEEF IN THE REFRIGERATOR,** not at room temperature. Allow 24 hours for 1 to 1-1/2-inch thick packages; 12 hours for patties. Cook as soon as possible after defrosting.
- **DO NOT EAT RAW OR RARE GROUND BEEF.** Because surface bacteria are transferred to the interior during grinding, it's risky to eat ground beef that has not been cooked to medium doneness (160°F).
- **COOK GROUND BEEF WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.** Partial cooking can promote bacterial growth.
- **AVOID CROSS-CONTAMINATION** between raw and cooked beef — during storage, preparation and serving. Wash hands, utensils, boards, counters and plates that have had contact with raw beef and juices, using hot soapy water.



DETERMINING DONENESS

- **COOK GROUND BEEF TO MEDIUM (160°F) DONENESS,** until not pink in center and juices show no pink color. The most accurate way to determine doneness of patties and meatloaf is with an instant-read thermometer.
- Due to the natural nitrate content of certain ingredients, such as onions, celery and bell peppers, meatloaf may remain pink even when a 160°F internal temperature has been reached. Always check the internal temperature using a meat thermometer or instant-read thermometer, making certain it reaches 160°F.