USDA BEEF QUALITY GRADING

UNDERSTANDING BEEF QUALITY GRADES

USDA PRIME

Prime beef is produced from young, well-fed cattle. It has the most marbling, is produced in smaller quantities than other grades, and is often sold in hotels and restaurants. Prime roasts and steaks are excellent for roasting, grilling or broiling.

USDA CHOICE

Choice beef is high quality and produced in highest quantity, but has less marbling than Prime. Choice roast and steaks, especially from the rib and loin, will be very tender, juicy and flavorful. They are suited for roasting, grilling or broiling. Less tender cuts are perfect for slow-cooking.

USDA SELECT

Select beef is slightly leaner than Prime and Choice because it has less marbling. It can lack some tenderness, flavor and juiciness as compared to the higher grades. Select grade beef often benefits from slow-cooking or from marination prior to grilling or broiling.

FACTORS IN DETERMINING A QUALITY GRADE:

Distribution of Marbling within Lean Muscle at 12th/13th Rib

Age/Maturity of Carcass

Color, Texture & Firmness of Lean Muscle

WHAT IS MARBLING?

Marbling, also known as intramuscular fat, is the fat intermingled with the beef muscle. Marbling is the primary factor in determining the quality grade of a beef carcass. When determining the amount of marbling, a grader will look at the ribeye where the carcass is cut at the 12th & 13th rib juncture. Marbling helps ensure and is a strong visual predictor of beef tenderness, flavor and juiciness and improves the overall palatability of beef.

NO ROLL | Standard and Commercial grades of beef are frequently sold as ungraded "No Roll" beef. Because No Roll does not carry a grade designation, thereis a risk it will not be as tender, flavorful and juicy as products graded Prime, Choice or Select.

BEEF

Funded by the Beef Checkoff.