

Natural, Organic & Conventional Beef

What's the Difference?



What does the term “natural” mean when referring to beef?

Most fresh beef is natural. The USDA defines natural beef as “minimally processed containing no additives,” which means no artificial flavors, colors or preservatives. This definition applies to all meat that does not have an ingredient label (a label is added if the product includes a marinade or solution). So, if there's no ingredient label, it is natural.

To determine exactly what a producer of natural beef means by the use of the term natural, read the product label or contact the manufacturer. By USDA rule, the label and in-store point-of-purchase material must explain how the term natural is being used in describing the product.

What is certified organic beef?

Certified organic beef must meet USDA National Organic Program standards. With the Organic Foods Protection Act, effective October 2002, USDA standards were set for all food labeled organic. For beef, this means:

- Cattle must be fed 100 percent organic feed but may be provided certain vitamin and mineral supplements
- Organically raised cattle may not be given hormones to promote growth or antibiotics for any reason. However, if an animal is sick, the animal cannot be denied treatment to ensure its health; any animal that is treated with antibiotics is taken out of the national organic program
- Organic beef must be certified through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)



What does it mean when a brand is “certified”?

When the word “certified” appears in the brand name, it means that the specifications such as breed or marbling scores are monitored and verified by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) or the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

This certification helps ensure product consistency.



When used under other circumstances, the term must be closely associated with the name of the organization responsible for the “certification” process, e.g., “XYZ Company's Certified Beef.”

What is conventional beef?

It's the beef most of us are familiar with — the classic, fresh, USDA-graded beef in the supermarket meat case. The majority of conventional beef is grain finished. Grain-finished beef cattle spend most of their lives in range or pasture conditions feeding on forage (grass). The feeding period typically lasts between 120 and 200 days, just prior to harvest. Corn is the chief ingredient in cattle feed for grain-finished beef cattle. Feed corn (not suitable for human consumption) is grown in abundance in the U.S. and provides a feed source for cattle year round. Grain-finishing beef assures a year-round supply of high quality beef and helps keep consumer prices down. In addition, corn feeding creates tender beef with the rich flavor most consumers prefer.

Is conventional beef natural?

Conventional beef is natural beef. The USDA defines natural beef as “minimally processed containing no additives.” All fresh beef found in the meat case that does not have an ingredient label (a label is added if the product includes a marinade or solution) is natural beef.

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What is Certified Hereford Beef?

Certified Hereford Beef® is a natural, conventionally grown branded-beef product owned by the 5,000 ranchers of the American Hereford Association, the keeper of purebred Hereford genetics. Our program is USDA certified and uses Hereford and specific Hereford crossbred cattle to yield a product superior in tenderness, flavor and juiciness. It's fed in the Midwest, the Napa Valley of beef.

Certified Hereford Beef :

- A natural, conventionally grown product with minimal processing and no added or artificial ingredients
- Grown from Hereford and specific Hereford crossbred cattle
- Naturally tender, juicy and flavorful beef
- Midwestern, grain-fed beef
- Consistent, research proven quality
- Economical
- Rancher and farmer owned



labeling of organic beef as safer than conventional.

Is certified organic beef better for me?

Many people purchase certified organic beef because of perceived health and nutrition benefits. However, there are no conclusive studies that determine certified organic beef or so called "natural" beef is healthier or safer than other types of beef. According to the American Council on Science and Health report, "The Role of Beef in the American Diet," published January 2003, organically produced food is no more safe or nutritious than conventionally-produced food.

Are all types of beef inspected for safety?

Yes. All beef, regardless of type, is subject to strict government oversight. U.S. procedures require that all U.S. cattle be inspected by a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspector or veterinarian before going to slaughter.

Are there lean beef options for each type of beef?

Consumers have lean beef choices no matter what type of beef they are purchasing. There are 19 cuts of beef that meet government guidelines for lean (low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol) and that includes some of America's favorites like tenderloin, T-bone and 93 or 95 percent lean ground beef.

Are antibiotics and hormones used in conventional beef?

Yes, they are judiciously used. Antibiotics are primarily used to treat, control and prevent disease. Growth promoting products are approved by the Food and Drug Administration based upon rigorous testing procedures similar to those used for human drugs.

Is there a difference in taste between conventional beef and other types of beef?

The analysis of existing flavor panel studies show consumers prefer the overall flavor of conventional (or grain finished) beef when compared to grass-finished beef. This study analysis can be found at:

<http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/beef/mp80.pdf>, on page 74.

Is organic beef more likely to be safe?

There is no safety difference in beef due to different production methods. No matter the type of production. U.S. beef is among the safest beef in the world thanks to adherence to sound science, strong government regulations and enforcement and diligence on the part of beef producers. America's beef producers have been leaders in developing and validating a majority of the safety interventions currently in place throughout the beef chain. USDA prohibits the

Did you know?

According to the USDA, the following are claims that are **not** to be used in beef marketing:

- Antibiotic free
- Hormone free
- Residue free
- Residue tested
- Naturally raised
- Naturally grown
- Drug free
- Chemical free
- Organic
- Organically raised

