

NATURAL

Meat and poultry labeled “natural” should not have any added artificial flavoring, color ingredients, chemical preservatives, or artificial or synthetic ingredients, and should be only “minimally processed” — defined by the USDA as a process that does not fundamentally alter the raw product. “Natural” has no bearing on the way the animal was raised or the food and additives that it was fed.

NO ADDED HORMONES

Animals were raised without added growth hormones. By law, hogs and poultry cannot be given hormones — so the use of the label on these meats is mere advertising. To ensure that other meats were raised without added hormones, ask your farmer or butcher.

NO ANTIBIOTIC USE

No antibiotics were administered to the animal during its lifetime. If an animal becomes sick, and needs antibiotics, it cannot be sold under this label.

NO FEEDLOTS

Feedlots are outdoor confinement operations that are most often used to “grain finish,” or fatten up cattle for slaughter during the last three to four months of its life. Meat bearing this label indicates that the animal went straight from the farm or ranch where it was raised to a USDA-certified slaughterhouse.

NON-CONFINED

Animals were not confined in a feedlot, and had continuous access to the outside throughout their lifecycle. This does not actually mean that the animals went outside.

NO MEAT/ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS

This label should indicate that the animals were raised on feed that contained no animal by-products (beaks, bones, tails, etc.). However, unlike the organic label, this claim is not verified by any third party source.

NO ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE

Antibiotics were not given to the animal to promote growth or to prevent disease, but may have been administered if the animal became ill.

ORGANIC

In order to be labeled “organic,” a product, its producer, and the farm where the ingredients come from must meet the USDA’s organic standards and must be certified by a USDA-approved food-certifying agency. Organic foods cannot be grown using synthetic fertilizers, chemicals, or sewage sludge, cannot be genetically modified, and cannot be irradiated. Organic meat and poultry must be fed only organically-grown feed (without any animal by-products) and cannot be treated with hormones or antibiotics. Furthermore, the animals must have access to the outdoors, and ruminants (animals with multi-chambered stomachs that chew their cud) must have access to pasture (but don’t actually have to go outdoors and graze on pasture to be considered organic).

PASTURE-RAISED

In general, pasturing is a traditional farming technique where animals are raised outdoors in a humane, ecologically sustainable manner and eat foods that nature intended them to eat. Animals are raised on pasture rather than being fattened on a feedlot or in a confined facility.

SOURCE VERIFIED

Source verified means that an animal is assigned an ID number at birth that allows it to be traced through its life, slaughter and sale. Source verification also tracks health records, feed records and genetic history. This system, however, does not indicate whether the animal was raised sustainably by local farmers — in fact, the cost of developing such a system is often prohibitive for independent growers. An inexpensive alternative is to simply buy directly from a local farmer who raised the animal and oversaw its slaughter.

SUSTAINABLE

While the word sustainable does not have a hard and fast definition, truly sustainable foods are raised locally by family farmers who promote the health of their animals, land and local communities. To be sure this label meets your expectations, ask your grocer or farmer for more information about how their animals were raised.

GLOSSARY OF
MEAT
PRODUCTION
METHODS

You want to eat better but all those labels are so confusing — what can you do?

Carry this handy
glossary when you shop
to find the best food for
you and your family.

 **sustainable table**
serving up healthy food choices



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GLOSSARY OF
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100% VEGETARIAN FEED

Animals are not fed any animal byproducts. This does not guarantee that they were raised outdoors or on pasture, but it should indicate that they were raised on grasses, hay, silage and other feed found on pasture or in a field. Grain, like corn, is vegetarian and falls into this category. This label does not reveal whether the animals were fed supplements or additives.

ARTISAN MEATS

Artisan butchers use traditional methods of butchering, curing, and preparing meats. Often passed down from generation to generation, artisan techniques lend themselves to working by hand to get the tastiest flavor out of a piece of meat. For this reason, artisan butchers often have close relationships with local farmers to ensure that, from farm to plate, their products are of the highest possible quality.

BIODYNAMIC

This holistic method of agriculture is based on the philosophy that all aspects of the farm should be treated as an interrelated whole. Having emerged as a non-chemical agriculture movement approximately 20 years before the development of “organic” agriculture, biodynamics has now spread throughout the world. Biodynamic farmers work in harmony with nature and use a variety of techniques, such as crop rotation and on-farm composting, to foster a sustainable and productive environment. Food labeled “biodynamic” must be certified by an independent third party.

CAGE FREE

Birds are raised without cages. What this doesn't explain is whether the birds were raised outdoors on pasture, if they had access to the outside, or if they were raised indoors in overcrowded conditions. If you want to buy eggs, poultry or meat that was raised outdoors, look for a label that says “Pastured” or “Pasture-raised,” or ask your local farmer.

Please note that products labeled with these terms, except organic and biodynamic, are not certified or verified by an independent source, so your best bet is to ask questions about where your food came from and to know your local farmer.

DRY AGED

Dry aged means that meat, most often beef, is aged in a refrigerated cooler at a certain temperature for up to a month. Cold dry aging allows moisture to evaporate from the meat, which concentrates the flavor. At the same time, natural enzymes in the meat break down fibrous and connective tissue – ensuring that the meat will be as tender as possible. Since cold storage space is expensive, only prime cuts like loin or rib meat are dry aged.

What's Best

- 1 Local sustainable or local organic from a small family farmer
- 2 Biodynamic
- 3 Organic

To find out more, please visit Sustainable Table at www.sustainabletable.org.



FREE-RANGE/ROAMING RUNNING

“Free Range” or “Free Roaming” means that the animal had some access to the outdoors each day. However, this doesn't guarantee that the animal actually spent any time outside. As long as a door to the outdoors is left open for some period of time, the animal can be considered Free Range. Although the USDA has defined this term for chicken raised for consumption, no standards have been set for egg-laying chickens or for other animals. If you want to buy eggs, poultry or meat that was raised outdoors, look for a label that says “Pastured” or “Pasture-raised,” or ask your local farmer.

GRAIN-FED

Industrial animal farms rely on corn and soy as a cheap source of protein-rich feed. However, ruminants like cows have stomachs that evolved to digest grasses and other forage. As a result, when these animals are fed a grain-heavy diet, they often have digestive problems, poor liver health, and, in extreme cases, their diet can kill them. If you want meat or poultry that was raised with a sustainable diet, look for “Pastured” or “Grass-fed.”

**Create change —
one forkful at a time.**

GRASS-FED

These animals eat grasses from weaning to slaughter. Their diet should not be supplemented with grain, animal byproducts, or synthetic hormones. They should not be given antibiotics to promote growth or prevent disease (though they may be given antibiotics to treat disease). Note that “grass-fed” does not guarantee that the animal was pastured or pasture-raised. While most grass-fed animals are pasture-raised, some may still be confined and fed a steady diet of grasses. While the USDA concurs with these standards, they are only voluntary. Farmers and ranchers may request that their use of the grass-fed label be verified through an independent auditing process, but are not required to do so.

HERITAGE

Heritage foods are derived from rare and endangered breeds of livestock and crops. Animals are purebreds, a specific breed of animal that is near extinction. Production standards are not required by law, but most heritage farmers use sustainable methods. Raising heritage breeds saves animals (and plants) from extinction and preserves genetic diversity.

IRRADIATION



Food labels that include the radura logo shown indicate that a product has been irradiated.

When meat is irradiated, it is exposed to very high doses of radiation that kill all bacteria — good and bad. While the claim is that irradiation makes food safer, it is useless against some common agricultural diseases, including foot and mouth, mad cow and hepatitis. The use of irradiation also undermines the incentive for industrial farms and processors to clean up their production methods. Irradiation is currently approved for beef, eggs, horsemeat, lamb, pork, poultry and many other products, including fruits and vegetables.

LOCAL

Local meats are raised as close to your home as possible. Depending on where you live, the closest farm raising meat for local sale could be as close as your backyard or as far as a neighboring state. If you are buying directly from an area farmer, your meat is definitely local. If you see the label in a store, ask your grocer where the meat was raised.

FOLDING DIRECTIONS

1. Print out the two sides of the Glossary on one sheet of 8.5 x 11 paper or, if that isn't possible, print on two sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper.

2. If printing on separate pieces of paper, paste front and back pages together.



front

back

3. Turn paper horizontal and fold along dotted line.



4. Rotate paper to the left, flip over and fold.



rotate



fold

5. Fold right panel and then left panel in along dotted line. Your **Glossary of Meat Production Methods** is now ready to use!

