

PORK or PORC

Pork is the culinary name for meat from the domestic pig (*Sus scrofa*), often specifically the fresh meat but can be used as an all-inclusive term. It is one of the most commonly consumed meats worldwide, with evidence of pig husbandry dating back to 5000 BC. The meat of the pig eaten fresh, as distinct from bacon and ham, which are cured. Pork can be bought all the year round, thanks to the modern refrigeration methods, and is particularly good value in summer. All joints can be roasted and the individual cuts from the grilled or fried. In addition, the forequarter cuts can be used for casseroles, stews and pies.

The lean part of pork should be pale pink, moist and slightly marbled with fat. There should be a good outer layer of firm, white fat with a thin, elastic skin. Small pinkish bones denotes an young animal. Pork must be well cooked to prevent the risk of infection by 'TRICHINOSIS', caused by worms which may be present in the meat. When thoroughly cooked, is often accompanied by something sweet and tart such as apple sauce.

Pork is eaten in various forms, including cooked (as roast pork), cured or smoked (ham, including the Italian *Prosciutto*) or a combination of these methods (gammon, bacon or *Pancetta*). It is also a common ingredient of sausages. Charcuterie is the branch of cooking devoted to prepared meat products, many from pork. Pork consumption is taboo in Islam and Judaism.

HISTORY

The pig is one of the oldest forms of livestock, having been domesticated as early as 5000 BC. It is believed to have been domesticated either in the Near East or in China from the wild boar. The adaptable nature and omnivorous diet of this creature allowed early humans to domesticate it much earlier than many other forms of livestock, such as cattle. Pigs were mostly used for food, but people also used their hide for shields and shoes, their bones for tools and weapons, and their bristles for brushes. Pigs have other roles within the human economy: their feeding behavior in searching for roots churns up the ground and makes it easier to plough; their sensitive noses lead them to truffles, an underground fungus highly valued by humans; and their omnivorous nature enables them to eat human rubbish, keeping settlements cleaner than they would otherwise have been.

Charcuterie is the branch of cooking devoted to prepared meat products such as bacon, ham, sausage, terrines, galantines, pâtés, and confit, primarily from pork. Originally intended as a way to preserve meats before the advent of refrigeration, these preparations are prepared today for their flavors that are derived from the preservation processes. In 15th century France local guilds regulated tradesman in the food production industry in each city. The guilds that produced *charcuterie* were those of the *charcutiers*. The members of this guild produced a traditional range of cooked or salted and dried meats, which varied, sometimes distinctively, from region to region. The only "raw" meat the *charcutiers* were allowed to sell was unrendered lard. The *charcutier* prepared numerous items including pâtés, rillettes, sausages, bacon, trotters, and head cheese. These preservation methods ensured that meats would have a longer shelf-life. Before the mass-production and re-engineering of pork in the 20th century, pork in Europe and North America was traditionally an autumn dish; pigs and other livestock coming to the slaughter in the autumn after growing in the spring and fattening during the summer. Due to the seasonal nature of the meat in Western culinary history, apples (harvested in late summer and autumn) have been a staple pairing to fresh pork. The year-round availability of meat and fruits has not diminished the popularity of this combination on Western plates.

PORK PRODUCTS

Pork may be cooked from fresh meat or cured over time. Cured meat products include ham and bacon. The carcass may be utilized in many different ways for fresh meat cuts, with the popularity of certain cuts and certain carcass proportions varying worldwide.

FRESH MEATS

Most of the carcass can be used to produce fresh meat and in the case of a suckling pig the whole body of a young pig ranging in age from two to six weeks is roasted.

PROCESSED PORK

Pork is particularly common as an ingredient of sausages. Many traditional European sausages are made with pork, including chorizo, fuet, Cumbrian sausage and salami. Most brands of American hot dogs and breakfast sausage are made from pork.

Ham and bacon are made from fresh pork by curing with salt (pickling) and/or smoking. Shoulders and legs are most commonly cured in this manner for ham whereas streaky and round bacon usually comes from the loin, although it may also come from the side and belly.

Ham and bacon are popular foods in the west, and their consumption has increased with industrialization. Non-western cuisines also use preserved meat products. For example, salted preserved pork or red roasted pork is used in Chinese and Asian cuisine.

Bacon is defined as any of certain cuts of meat taken from the sides, belly or back that have been cured and/or smoked. In continental Europe, it is used primarily in cubes (lardons) as a cooking ingredient valued both as a source of fat and for its flavour. In Italy, besides being used in cooking, bacon (pancetta) is also served uncooked and thinly sliced as part of an antipasto. Bacon is also used for barding and larding roasts, especially game birds. Many people prefer to have their bacon smoked, using various types of wood. This process can take up to ten hours depending on the intensity of the flavour desired. Bacon may be eaten fried, baked, or grilled.

A side of unsliced bacon is a flitch or slab bacon, while an individual slice of bacon is a rasher (United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Australia and New Zealand) or simply a slice or strip (North America). Slices of bacon are also known as collops. Traditionally, the skin is left on the cut and is known as bacon rind. Rindless bacon, however, is quite common. In the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, bacon comes in a wide variety of cuts and flavours whereas bacon in the United States and is predominantly what is known as "streaky bacon", or "streaky rashers". Bacon made from the meat on the back of the pig is referred to as back bacon and is part of traditional Full breakfast commonly eaten in Britain and Ireland. In the United States, back bacon may also be referred to as Canadian-style Bacon or Canadian Bacon.

The USDA defines bacon as "the cured belly of a swine carcass", while other cuts and characteristics must be separately qualified (e.g. "smoked pork loin bacon"). "USDA Certified" bacon means that it has been treated for trichinella.

The canned meat Spam is made of chopped pork shoulder meat and ham.

USE OF THE WHOLE CARCASS

In order to utilise the whole carcass ("everything but the oink"), parts of the pig such as knuckle, pig's feet ("trotters"), chitterlings (pork intestines), and hog jowls may be eaten. In earlier centuries in the United States some of these products figured prominently in the traditional diets of poor Southerners (see soul food). Scrapple and McRib are other examples of aggregate pork products. Feijoada, the national dish of Brazil (also served in Portugal), is prepared with pork trimmings: ears, tail and feet.

NUTRITION

In gastronomy, pork is traditionally considered a white meat, but in nutritional studies, it is usually grouped with beef as red meat, and public perceptions have been changing. Its myoglobin content is lower than beef, but much higher than chicken white meat. The USDA treats pork as a red meat. Pork is very high in thiamin.

In 1987 the U.S. National Pork Board, began an advertising campaign to position pork as "the other white meat" due to a public perception of chicken and turkey (white meat) as more healthy than red meat. The campaign was highly successful and resulted in 87% of consumers identifying pork with the slogan. As of 2005, the slogan is still used in marketing pork, with some variations.

POTENTIAL HEALTH RISK

Uncooked or untreated, the meat may harbour worms and latent diseases. Many of these infestations are harbored in other animals as well, such as salmonella in chicken.

Influenza (flu) is one of the most notable illnesses which pigs share with humans. However, the origin of the illness is found in a number of animals besides pigs. It is harbored in the lungs of the animal during the summer months and can affect both the animal and humans.

Consuming excessive amounts of pork may lead to gallstones and obesity; due to its high cholesterol and saturated fat content. However, this goes for all sorts of animal flesh, and pork is in fact quite lean - leaner than most other domesticated animals - as long as its protective layer of fat is removed.

The pig is the carrier of various helminths, like roundworm, pinworm, hookworm, etc. One of the most dangerous and common is *Taenia solium*, a type of tapeworm. Tapeworms may transplant to human intestines as well by consuming untreated or uncooked meat from pigs or other animals.

TRICHINOSIS

Trichinosis, also called trichinellosis, or trichiniasis, is a parasitic disease caused by eating raw or undercooked pork infected with the larvae of a species of roundworm *Trichinella spiralis*, commonly called the trichina worm. Infection was once very common, but is now rare in the developed world. From 1997 to 2001, an annual average of 12 cases per year were reported in the United States. The number of cases has decreased because of legislation prohibiting the feeding of raw meat garbage to hogs, increased commercial and home freezing of pork, and the public awareness of the danger of eating raw or undercooked pork products.

JUDAISM

Pig's meat, including pork, is one of the most well known examples of nonkosher food. The basis for this prohibition are Leviticus chapter 11 and Deuteronomy chapter 14:

Leviticus 11:2-4, 7-8

"These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the animals that are upon the land. Everything that possesses a split hoof, which is fully cloven, and that brings up its cud -- this you may eat. But this is what you shall not eat from what brings up its cud or possesses split hooves -- the camel, because it brings up its cud but does not possess split hooves...and the pig, because it has split hooves that are completely cloven, but it does not bring up its cud -- it is impure to you and from its flesh you may not eat."

Deuteronomy 14:8

"And the pig, because it possesses split hooves and does not bring up its cud -- from its flesh you may not eat."

As indicated by the biblical verses, Jews may not consume any land animal that does not possess both kosher signs:

1. The animal must possess completely split hooves
2. The animal must bring up its cud

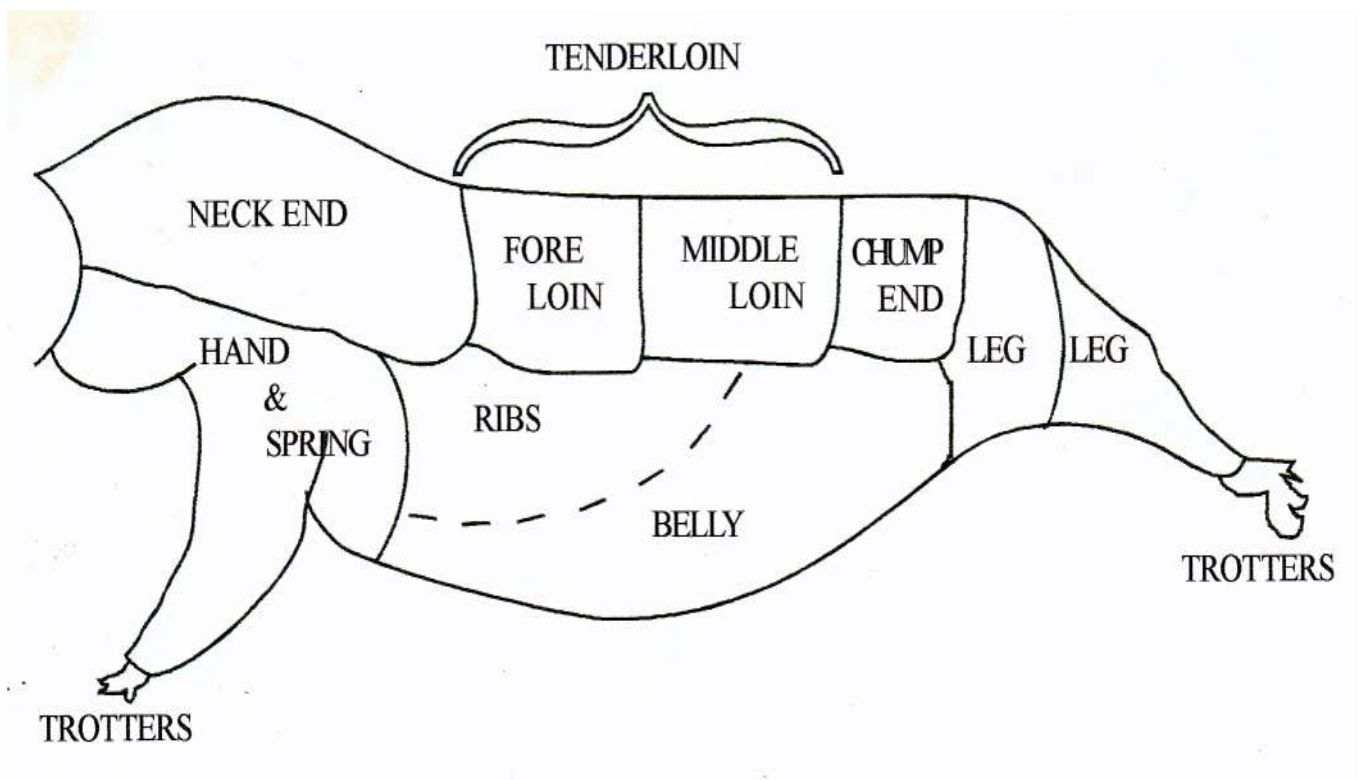
Although, as for most other commandments, the Torah does not provide a rationale, many reasons for this ban have been proposed.

ISLAM

Throughout the Islamic world many countries severely restrict the importation or consumption of pork products. Examples are Iran, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The Qur'anic basis for the Islamic prohibition of pork can be found in surahs 2:173, 5:3, 5:60, 6:145 and 16:115.

OTHER RELIGIONS AND CULTURES

Seventh-day Adventists likewise eat no pork. The Rastafari too avoid the consumption of pork, their basis is also the book of Leviticus. The Scottish pork taboo was Donald Alexander Mackenzie's phrase for discussing an aversion to pork amongst Scots, particularly Highlanders, which he believed to stem from an ancient taboo. Several writers who confirm that there was a prejudice against pork, or a superstitious attitude to pigs, do not see it in terms of a taboo related to an ancient cult. Any prejudice is generally agreed to have been fading by 1800.



CUTS AND METHODS OF COOKING PORK

- A) Neck End (Spare Rib & Blade Bone) - Is a large economical roasting joint, particularly good when Boned, stuffed and rolled. It is often divided into blade and spare rib, these two smaller cuts being suitable for roasting, braising or stewing. Spare rib pork makes the best filling for pies. Spare rib chops are suitable for braising, grilling or frying.
- B) Hand & Spring - Is a large roasting joint, often divided into the smaller cuts, hand and shank. As well as being suitable for roasting, hand and shank can be used for casserole and stews.
- C) Belly - Is a long, thin cut with streaks of fat and lean meat. Stuffed thick end of belly makes an economical roast. Belly is sometimes rather fatty and is best sliced and grilled or fried, rather than braised or stewed.
- D) Spare Ribs (American) - Are from the belly and are removed in one piece, leaving the meat between the rib bones. Chinese spareribs are bones with a very small amount of meat on them. They are usually barbecued or used in Chinese dishes.
- E) Leg - Can be cut into 4 or more succulent and popular roasting joint, often divided into fillet end and knuckle end. The fillet end is the prime roasting joint, which can be boned and stuffed. It is sometimes sliced into steaks for grilling and frying. The feet (trotters) are usually salted and boiled or used to make brawn.
- F) Loin - Is a popular roast on the bone or boned, stuffed and rolled. It is often divided into loin chops and large, meaty chump chops, both of which are excellent for grilling, frying or roasting. The loin produces good crackling. Two loins of pork are used to make a crown roast of pork.
- G) Tenderloin - As its name suggests, it is tender, lean cut, found underneath the backbone of the loin, in the same position of beef fillet. It is sometimes called pork fillet, not to be confused with the fillet end of leg. Tenderloin is most often served sliced or cubed for frying, or coated with a sauce. It can be stuffed and rolled for roasting.