

Lean meats: 10 tips for low-fat cooking



These 10 tips can help you cut the fat in your meat and poultry.

Meat and poultry are favorite sources of essential protein yet they can be high in fat, especially unhealthy saturated fat and cholesterol. Because of this, most healthy diets recommend just modest amounts of these nutritious foods. Knowing how to pick the right cuts of meat and practicing low-fat cooking techniques can cut unnecessary fat from your diet and help you achieve your healthy eating goals. These 10 tips can help.

- **Choose lean cuts of meat and poultry.** The leanest poultry choice is white meat from the breast of chicken or turkey, without the skin. Lean cuts of beef include round, chuck, sirloin or tenderloin. Lean pork includes tenderloin and loin chops.
- **Check labels on ground meat.** When buying ground beef, look for packages with the highest percentage lean meat — 90 percent or higher. Most grocery stores offer several types of ground beef with varying percentages of lean meat by weight.
- **Try low-fat ground turkey or chicken breast meat.** Ground poultry can have as much fat as ground beef has, or more, because it often includes dark meat and skin. To make the leanest choice, choose ground breast meat, or look for low-fat ground chicken or turkey.
- **Select meat with the least amount of visible fat.** Marbled meat is streaked with fat. Select beef that is labeled "Choice" or "Select" instead of "Prime" — which usually has more fat.
- **Trim off any visible, solid fat from meat and poultry.** This includes the skin on poultry. When roasting a whole chicken or turkey, leave the skin on during cooking, but remove it and the fat underneath before eating. Also, remove any visible fat from pork and beef after cooking.
- **Choose low-fat marinades.** Marinades can enhance flavor, tenderize meat and keep food moist while cooking. Choose low-fat marinades, such as mixtures of herbs or spices with wine, soy sauce, cider vinegar or lemon juice.
- **Use low-fat cooking methods.** Low-fat cooking methods include grilling, broiling, roasting, sautéing and baking. When cooking meat in your oven, be sure to put the meat on a rack within a baking pan so that the fat drips away.
- **Cook meat in advance.** Make soups, stews and other dishes in which you boil the meat in liquid a day or two in advance and then refrigerate it. As the dish chills, the fat hardens on the top and you can easily remove the fat.
- **Drain fat after cooking.** After cooking ground meat, drain the fat from the pan and rinse the meat with hot water. Blot the meat with a paper towel to remove the water.
- **Watch serving sizes.** Reducing your portion size of meat and poultry further reduces your fat and cholesterol intake. Three ounces of meat is about the size of a deck of cards. Three ounces also equals 1/2 of a boneless, skinless chicken breast, 1 skinless chicken leg with thigh and 2 thin slices of lean roast beef.