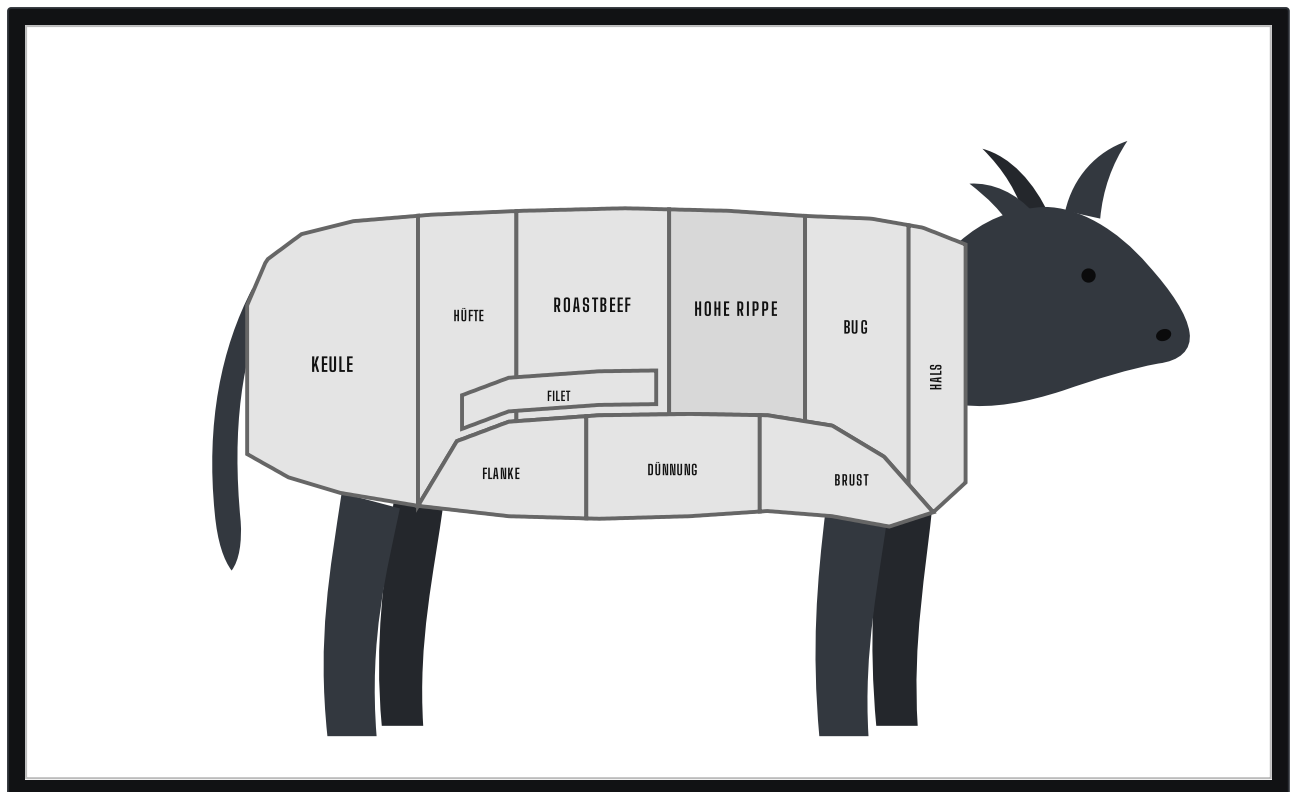


BEEF CUTS

WHICH CUT SITS WHERE?

A grown steer yields around 300 kilograms of usable meat, spread across some 25 primal cuts. Only a quarter of that is steak material in the narrow sense. This map shows where those pieces sit, what they are called in three languages and how much heat they can take.



FRONT BACK · 10-20 % FAT

RIB

The rib section from the 6th to the 12th rib. Three muscles converge here, and between them lies the characteristic eye of fat. No other primal is as heavily marbled.

Best method: the rib handles high heat without trouble – the intramuscular fat protects it from drying out.

To the rib section →

REFERENCE

EVERY STEAK CUT AT A GLANCE

The same piece of muscle often goes by entirely different names in Luxembourg, France, Germany and the United States – and sometimes the same name refers to two different cuts. This table lines the common terms up against each other.

CUT	FRENCH	GERMAN	PRIMAL	PORTION	METHOD
Ribeye	Entrecôte	Entrecôte	Rib	250–350 g	Quick sear
Bone-in ribeye	Côte de bœuf	Côte de Bœuf	Rib	700–1200 g	Reverse sear
Tomahawk	Côte à l'os longue	Tomahawk	Rib	1000–1600 g	Reverse sear
Rib cap / spinalis	Calotte	Rib Cap	Rib	150–250 g	Quick sear
Striploin / NY strip	Contre-filet	Rumpsteak	Short loin	220–320 g	Quick sear
T-bone	T-bone	T-Bone	Short loin + tenderloin	600–800 g	Reverse sear
Porterhouse	Porterhouse	Porterhouse	Short loin + tenderloin	800–1400 g	Reverse sear
Tenderloin head	Chateaubriand	Chateaubriand	Tenderloin	400–600 g	Sear & oven

CUT	FRENCH	GERMAN	PRIMAL	PORTION	METHOD
Filet mignon	Tournedos	Tournedos	Tenderloin	160–220 g	Quick sear
Top sirloin cap	Rumsteck / culotte	Picanha	Rump	1000–1500 g	Grill / rodizio
Tri-tip	Aiguillette baronne	Tri-Tip	Rump	700–1200 g	Reverse sear
Sirloin steak	Rumsteck	Hüftsteak	Rump	200–280 g	Quick sear
Spider steak	Araignée	Bürgermeisterstück	Round	400–700 g	Quick sear
Flat iron / butler's steak	Macreuse à bifteck	Flat Iron	Chuck	200–300 g	Quick sear
Petite tender	Jumeau	Teres Major	Chuck	300–500 g	Quick sear
Denver steak	Basses côtes	Denver Cut	Neck	200–300 g	Quick sear
Flank steak	Bavette de flanchet	Flanksteak	Flank	600–1000 g	Grill, slice thin
Flap meat	Bavette d'loyau	Bavette	Flank	400–800 g	Grill, slice thin
Skirt steak	Hampe	Skirt Steak	Short plate	300–500 g	Very hot, very short
Hanger steak	Onglet	Onglet	Short plate	300–500 g	Very hot, very short
Short ribs	Plat de côtes	Short Ribs	Short plate	800–1500 g	Braise / smoke
Brisket	Poitrine	Brust	Brisket	3000–6000 g	Low & slow
Shank / osso buco	Jarret	Beinscheibe	Shank	300–500 g	Braise

Portion sizes refer to standard retail cuts. Weights vary considerably by breed, age and butcher.

RIB: RIBEYE, ENTRECÔTE AND TOMAHAWK

The rib runs from the sixth to the twelfth rib. What sets it apart is the combination of three muscles: the large back muscle (*longissimus dorsi*), the cap lying over it (*spinalis dorsi*) and the small *complexus*. Between them sits the famous eye of fat – the core of fat that gave the ribeye its name.

That very fat is what makes the cut so forgiving: where a tenderloin turns dry two degrees past the mark, here rising temperature melts fat between the fibres. If you are unsure of hitting the point, start with ribeye rather than fillet.

ENTRECÔTE OR RIBEYE — IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

At heart both names describe the same cut, only from two butchering traditions. The French entrecôte is usually cut a little thinner and comes from the front section; the American ribeye is often thicker and cut with a larger share of the cap. On Luxembourgish restaurant menus both terms sit side by side and in practice mean the same thing.

THE TOMAHAWK

A ribeye with the rib bone frenched to 15 or 30 centimetres. The long bone adds nothing in the kitchen and everything on the plate – which is why it is the classic for a table of two. One caveat: at five to seven centimetres thick, the tomahawk only works with an indirect pre-cooking phase, otherwise the crust is black before the core is warm.

THE BEST BITE ON THE WHOLE ANIMAL

If you ask your butcher whether he can trim out the **rib cap** (French *calotte*, Latin *spinalis*) separately, you get the cap muscle of the rib as a cut of its own. It combines the marbling of a ribeye with a tenderness close to fillet. Many butchers grind it into mince, because almost nobody asks for it.

SHORT LOIN: STRIPLOIN, T-BONE, PORTERHOUSE

Behind the rib the back muscle continues and grows leaner. This is the short loin – in France contre-filet, in the United States strip loin. Its signature features are the broad fat cap along the top and a distinctly firmer grain than the ribeye. If you like a steak with bite, this is your cut.

Do not trim the fat edge off; instead score it every two centimetres almost down to the meat. That stops the steak from curling in the pan, and the rendered fat becomes your cooking fat.

T-BONE AND PORTERHOUSE

Cut the short loin crosswise through the vertebra and you get the back muscle on one side of the T-shaped bone and the tenderloin on the other. The only difference between the two cuts is the size of the tenderloin: on a T-bone it measures less than about five centimetres, on a porterhouse more. The porterhouse therefore comes from further back, where the tenderloin gets thicker.

A practical problem: two muscles with different fat contents on one bone will never finish at the same moment. Lay the steak on the grill so the tenderloin points towards the cooler zone.

TENDERLOIN: THE TENDEREST, NOT THE BEST

The tenderloin lies on the inside of the lumbar spine and is barely used when the animal walks. Without load the muscle forms little connective tissue – hence the proverbial tenderness. The price for it: at two to four per cent fat, the tenderloin lacks what carries flavour.

Three sections are cut from the whole tenderloin: the thick head (chateaubriand, traditionally for two), the even centre (tournedos, filet mignon) and the tapering tail (medallions, fondue, stroganoff). A whole tenderloin weighs between 1.8 and 3 kilograms depending on breed.

Because the flavour of its own is muted, classical cooking works here with companions: a bacon wrap, herb butter, béarnaise or a red wine jus. Eating fillet without a sauce wastes it.

RUMP: PICANHA AND TRI-TIP

The rump adjoins the short loin at the back. In South America, this is where steak culture really begins: the **picanha** – the rump cap with a one- to two-centimetre fat layer – is the signature cut of every Brazilian rodizio. It is grilled whole or bent into a C on a skewer, fat side towards the embers, with the cooked outer layers carved off in stages.

The **tri-tip** comes from the lower rump and became a cult cut in California. It is triangular, has two different grain directions and therefore has to be sliced in two stages.

Both cuts want the same treatment: coarse sea salt, nothing else, and slicing strictly against the grain.

ROUND: LEAN, CHEAP, UNDERRATED

Topside, silverside, knuckle and rump make up the hindquarter. Little of it is suitable for steak in the classic sense – with one exception: the **spider steak**, French *araignée* ("spider") after its web-like fat pattern. It is a small, well-marbled muscle on the inside of the rump and surprisingly tender.

The rest of the round goes into roulades, roasts, fondue or – sliced paper-thin against the grain – into carpaccio and tartare. The shank becomes osso buco and the basis for powerful stocks.

CHUCK AND SHOULDER: WHERE THE INSIDER PICKS ARE

The shoulder is a web of more than twenty muscles. Two of them are worth hunting down:

- **Flat iron** (top blade, *macreuse à bifteck*) – the second tenderest muscle on the animal after the tenderloin, though it runs through a substantial central sinew. Remove it and two perfect flat steaks are left.
- **Teres major** ("butcher's tenderloin", *petite tender*) – a small, spindle-shaped muscle that recalls a fillet in shape and texture but has considerably more flavour of its own.

The **Denver cut** from the neck end is the third candidate: heavily marbled, powerful in aroma, but only genuinely tender up to medium rare.

FLANK: AROMA INSTEAD OF TENDERNESS

Flank steak and bavette are coarse-grained, lean and intensely flavoured. In Argentina, Mexico and France they have long been classics; in German-speaking countries they were sold as boiling beef for decades.

The rule for both cuts: do not cook past medium rare, rest for at least ten minutes and then slice as thinly as possible against the grain. Slice with the grain and you get chewing gum – regardless of the quality of the meat.

SHORT PLATE: SKIRT, HANGER AND SHORT RIBS

The rib belly delivers the most aromatic cuts on the animal. The **skirt steak** (French *hampe*) is the diaphragm muscle and is traditionally used for fajitas: two minutes per side at maximum heat, no more.

The **hanger steak** or onglet hangs freely between the kidneys. There is only one per animal, which is why butchers used to keep it for themselves – hence the name *butcher's steak*. It has a thick central sinew that must be removed before cooking.

Short ribs go the opposite way: eight hours at 110 °C, until the collagen gels and the meat falls off the bone.

BRISKET

The brisket consists of two muscles – the lean *flat* and the fatty *point*, separated by a thick layer of fat. It was always known in Europe as boiling beef, but it owes its fame to Texan barbecue: 10 to 14 hours in smoke at 110 °C, until the core reaches 92 to 95 °C.

The point yields the *burnt ends*: diced, glazed again and returned to the smoke for a second round.

NECK AND CHUCK ROLL

The neck works constantly and is correspondingly laced with connective tissue. It is no use for quick searing – but anyone making goulash, ragout or pulled beef will find the best raw material here. Neck is also first choice for burger mince: at around 20 per cent fat the patty stays juicy without falling apart.

There is one exception: the **chuck eye steak**, right where the neck meets the rib. It comes from the same muscle strand as the ribeye and is therefore also called the "poor man's ribeye" – at roughly half the price.

FOR COMPARISON: THE AMERICAN BUTCHERING SCHEME WITH ITS PRIMAL CUTS. IT DIVIDES THE ANIMAL MORE COARSELY THAN THE EUROPEAN ONE – RIB CORRESPONDS TO THE HOHE RIPPE, SHORT LOIN TO THE ROASTBEEF, ROUND TO THE KEULE.

EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN BUTCHERING

The most important difference lies in the direction of the cut: European butchers separate along the natural boundaries between muscles, while American butchers first break the animal down into eight large primal cuts and then saw straight through several muscles at once. That is why the United States has cuts like the T-bone and the porterhouse, which run through bone and two muscles – in a classical French breakdown they would never arise.

In practice this means: if you want to order an American cut from your butcher, bring along the information about which primal it comes from. Not everyone knows "flat iron", but "the top blade with the central sinew removed" gets you there.