Beef Choices	The more than 800,000 beef producers throughout the United States offer a variety of beef choices to meet the changing lifestyles of consumers. Beef producers have adapted their practices to provide consumers with the grain-fed, grass-finished, certified organic or natural beef they desire. While each kind of beef offers specific value to consumers, all beef is safe and nutritious.
Nutritional Value of Beef	U.S. beef is leaner than ever and is a premier, naturally nutrient-rich food, which helps consumers get more nutrients from their calories. • 29 cuts of beef (including 10 of the 12 most popular cuts) meet government guidelines for lean; these include the tenderloin, sirloin and 95% lean ground beef. • Beef has eight times more vitamin B_{12}, six times more zinc and three times more iron than skinless chicken breast.
Beef Safety	All beef goes through a rigorous inspection process and is subject to strict government guidelines to ensure the highest level of safety. All cattle are inspected by a public health veterinarian before entering the packing plant, and those with any signs of illness are not allowed into the food supply.
Grain-fed Beef	Grain-fed is the most widely produced type of beef in the United States. Grain-fed cattle spend most of their lives eating grass in pastures before moving to a feedlot where they are fed a carefully balanced diet of grain, as well as vitamins and mineral supplements, for approximately four to six months.
Certified Organic Beef	Beef must be from cattle that meet U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program (NOP) livestock production requirements to be classified as certified organic. All kinds of beef may be eligible for USDA's NOP certification if specified requirements are met. The Organic Foods Production Act, effective October 2002, sets the standards for all food labeled organic (http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/FactSheets/ProdHandE.html). For beef, this means: • Cattle must be fed 100-percent organic feed, but may be given certain vitamin and mineral supplements. • Organically raised cattle may not be given hormones to promote growth or antibiotics. If an animal is sick, it cannot be denied treatment to ensure its health; however, animals treated with antibiotics must be taken out of the NOP. • Organically raised cattle must have access to pasture. They may be temporarily confined only for reasons of health, safety, the animal's stage of production, or to protect soil or water quality. The majority of cattle in the U.S., regardless of how they are raised, meet this requirement.
Natural Beef	By government definition, most beef is natural. According to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), natural may be used on a label for meat if: • The product does not contain any artificial flavor or flavoring, coloring ingredient, chemical preservative or any other artificial or synthetic ingredient; and • The product and its ingredients are not more than minimally processed (FSIS Directive 7220.1 Policy Memo 55 "Natural Claims"). The government's definition of natural does not consider the manner in which animals are raised or what they are fed. Natural beef can be grain-fed, grass-finished or organic as long as it is minimally processed and contains no additives. • Beef producers wishing to make marketing claims associated with what their animals are fed or how their animals are raised must submit a documented quality manual to USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). • Many of these process claims, including "raised without hormones," "no antibiotics," "free-range," "pasture-raised," "grass-finished" and "grain-fed," must be approved by USDA FSIS before they can be used on a label.
Grass-finished Beef	Grass-finished beef (sometimes marketed as grass-fed beef) comes from cattle that have been raised on a forage diet their entire lives. While most cattle spend the majority of their lives in pastures eating grass before moving to a feedlot for grain-finishing, grass-finished beef cattle remain on a pasture and forage diet. Producing grass-finished beef cattle in large volumes is difficult in North America where few regions have the growing season to make it possible. Most grass-finished beef is imported from Australia and New Zealand where grass is in greater abundance than feed corn and grows year-round.

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