

SELLING PORK DIRECT TO THE CUSTOMER

THE GUIDELINES

Before embarking on any direct selling to the consumer, it is essential that you are aware of the many laws and regulations which apply to food premises. Which ones apply to you depend on what you do, how you do it and how much you produce. The way product is distributed and sold will determine which hygiene regulations apply to your business. To ensure that you are aware of which regulations apply to you, contact the following organisations for advice:

- Local Environmental Health Authority
- Local Planning Department
- Local Trading Standards Department

*Ignorance of the law is no defence in the event of prosecution.
There is no excuse for not knowing which legislation applies to
you and what it requires of you.*

HYGIENE

It is essential that strict hygiene controls are carried out during all storage, preparation and distribution activities:

- During work in progress, meat and meat products should be out of refrigeration for as short a period as possible.
- Ensure that all surfaces which may come into contact with food and equipment are cleaned and disinfected before use, frequently during use and between use for raw and cooked products.
- Ensure that a 'clean as you go policy' exists. Do not allow waste to accumulate on surfaces, keep all waste in bins with lids and remove from food preparation, storage or display areas as soon as practical.
- Ensure that personal hygiene rules are followed, in particular hand washing with a suitable antibacterial agent; before starting work, after using the toilet, after handling raw products or ingredients, after rest breaks, between handling raw & cooked meats and at any other appropriate time.
- Ensure that, if you are unsure of any aspect of hygiene practice relating to your business, you contact your local Environmental Health Officer without delay.

STORAGE OF PORK CARCASSES

After slaughter carcasses should be stored under refrigeration at temperatures below 4°C, in accordance with 'A Blueprint for Lean and Tender Pork' leaflet available from the MLC which covers the following details:

- 1) Standards for pork production
- 2) Standards for the loading and transport of live pigs
- 3) Standards for abattoirs and cutting plants
- 4) Specifications for carcasses and sides
- 5) Specifications for primals and retail cuts
- 6) Recommendations for labelling
- 7) Dietary constraints

CURING BACON

Home Cured Bacon

In addition to selling fresh pork many retailers now cure their own bacon.

The procedure is fairly simple. However some investment in equipment will be required such as slicing, vacuum packaging machinery and a brine tank or pump.

As for all meat product manufacture there are legal compositional and labelling requirements to be considered.

If you intend curing your own bacon seek advice from either suppliers of curing ingredients or by contacting MLC.

PACKAGING

The shelf life of pork and bacon is determined by the method of packaging used. If cuts are going to be displayed for sale in a farm shop then they should be maintained at temperatures below 4°C and ideally sold and consumed within 7 to 10 days of slaughter.

The most widely used form of packaging for storage is vacuum packing; this extends the shelf life of pork to up to 4 weeks providing the packs are stored at 0°C and are undamaged.

Advantages of Vacuum packing:

- The system can be used to mature meat
- Storage life is extended
- Flexible size of packs
- Small scale machinery available
- Storage and stock control is easier

Disadvantages of Vacuum packing:

- Capital cost of machine
- Vac pack bags are more costly than ordinary polythene bags
- The process causes meat to turn purple in colour
- There is an acidic odour given off when the pack is opened. The degree will depend on the time and conditions spent in packaging. However, if conditions have been right this odour soon disappears.

Temperature again is vital to the storage life and if the temperature is raised the storage time will be greatly reduced.

LABELLING

The composition and labelling of food offered for sale is governed by complex legislation with heavy penalties for failing to comply with its requirements.

The requirements vary depending on what the product is and how it is offered for sale to the customer. You should seek advice from your local Trading Standards Office on how to label what you are producing and selling if you are in doubt.

As a general rule the following is required for pre-packed food. The name of the food, a list of ingredients, a "best before" or "use by" date mark, any special storage or conditions of use, name and address of the labeller, manufacturer or packer.

Generally if the food is not pre-packed or is pre-packed at the point of sale for direct sale to the customer then the food need only carry a name and price per kilo, together with an indication of certain categories of additives. Imperial measures can be shown but the primary unit must be metric.

Boxed products should be labelled bearing the following information:

Pack labels:

- Name and address or code of supplier
- Product description and weight
- Slaughter date and packaging date

Retail Pack labels:

Packs must comply with legal requirements and should be marked in a way which allows traceability. Consumer helpful labelling should extend to:

- Storing information (suitability for freezing)
- Cooking instructions
- Serving/recipe advice
- Nutritional information

CONSUMER INFORMATION

To help your customers enjoy the product you have carefully produced, then correct information on how to store and cook the product is helpful. Below are some key points:

A) Hand: Economic joints for roasting, full of flavour, but bone-in is an awkward joint to carve. Can be boned and rolled, cut into lean cubes or used for mince.

B) Spare rib (Collar): Not to be confused with the spare ribs from the belly. The spare rib comes from the shoulder and maybe boned and rolled to produce good sized roasting joints. Spare rib chops may be sold bone-in or boneless. They are not quite so lean as loin or chump chops but are very succulent. Ideal for grilling, frying or braising, but can be cut into cubes for casseroles.

C) Belly: New style slices, are leaner as well as boneless and provide a more fashionable alternative to the traditional belly pork. Belly slices may be sold coated in various flavoured marinades. Joints are usually boned and rolled and may be stuffed. Belly is suitable for grilling, frying, roasting or use on the barbecue or in microwave cooking.

Spare ribs: Cut from the loin and belly area, and may be left as full sheets of ribs or cut into individual riblets. Ideal for grilling, barbecue or roasting. Often sold 'Kitchen-ready' in a barbecue or Chinese style marinade.

D) Loin: The loin can produce a wide choice of cuts, bone-in rib and loin chops, boneless loin steaks, and new double loin steaks and loin joints are all available. All can be produced with the rind on or off. Chops and steaks make a quick meal and are all suitable for grilling, frying, roasting or use on the barbecue or in microwave cooking.

E) Chump Chops/Steaks: Traditional chump chops have the bone in, but boneless chump steaks now provide a choice. Chump End is also sold as a roasting joint, either bone-in or boneless. Thinly sliced chump steaks can be beaten flat into escalopes. Chump steaks make a good substitute for the more expensive tenderloin. Trimmed of all fat, the chump is ideal for producing cubes for kebabs, or strips for stir-fries. The Chump is suitable for grilling, frying, roasting or use on the barbecue or in microwave cooking.

F) Leg (Gigot) Joints: The leg is traditionally cut into two main joints, the prime fillet end and the shank (knuckle end) and sold bone-in.

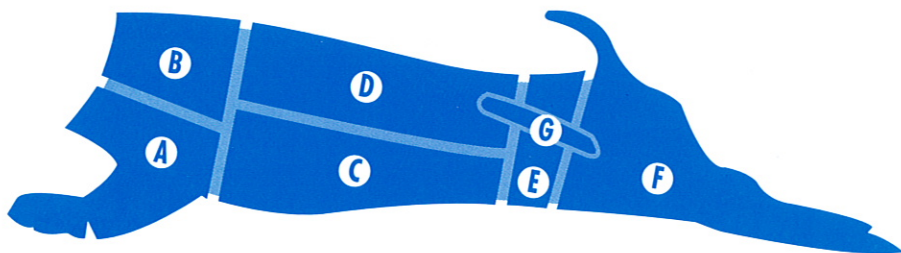
Boneless rolled joints are becoming increasingly popular (and are very easy to carve). These are all prime roasting joints.

Boneless leg steaks meet the growing demand for convenience, being quick and easy to grill, fry or microwave. Lean steaks may also be used for quality cubes for casseroles and kebabs, or thinly sliced for stirfries.

G) Tender Loin (Fillet): The fillet is a very lean and tender muscle, often left attached to the loin chops, but may be removed and sold whole or cut across the grain of the meat as medallions. Popular for all quick cooking methods, and may be marinated, stuffed or wrapped in pastry to keep it moist. Ideal for cutting into thin strips for stirfries.

A,B,C) Minced Pork: Usually prepared from the fore-end, well trimmed to produce a versatile lean mince. Ideal for all types of easily prepared, quickly cooked dishes, including burgers, grill sticks and croquettes. Suitable for grilling, frying, roasting or use on the barbecue or in microwave cooking.

A,B,F) Cubed Pork: Trimmed from suitable muscles from the leg or shoulder, cubed into neat even sized pieces. Ideally suited for threading onto skewers for kebabs, or for casserole dishes.



SELLING TO THE PUBLIC

There is a variety of ways to sell products to the public: Direct from the farm, via mail order, the Internet or through local butchers and catering butchers. Your local authority will advise you on the requirements you will need to follow depending on the distribution methods you choose.

If packing for take away from the farm then normal food grade wrapping paper and plastic bags will be sufficient. Bone-in pork cuts should be packed in strong plastic bags to avoid punctures.

If pork is being sold by mail order, strong packaging material with insulated properties will be required. Fresh meat distributed by mail order must be packed in such a way that it arrives at the customer below 7°C.

The Royal Mail will distribute fresh meat providing:

- Items are able to withstand a journey of up to 2 days.
- Items are clearly marked 'perishable'.
- All fresh meat items must be packed in a waterproof wrapping inside a rigid box, ideally lined with disposable ice packs. The most suitable boxes to use are made of polystyrene, plastic or stiff waxed cardboard: Contact Jackie Hawkes in MLC's Trade Marketing Department on 01908 844107 for supplier details.
- Items must be sent on a minimum service of 1st Class.

Most major couriers will also distribute fresh meat based on the above guidelines; it is advisable to contact the chosen courier for more advice:

Royal Mail Customer Service: 08457 950950

Parcelforce Customer Service: 0800 224466

ADVISE YOUR CUSTOMERS ON HOW TO STORE FRESH MEAT AT HOME:

- All fresh and cooked meat must be well covered and stored in the refrigerator at all times.
- Ideally raw meat should be kept on a shelf as low as possible in the refrigerator.
- It is imperative that juices of raw meat never drip onto cooked foods.
- Left over meats should be returned to the refrigerator as soon as possible.
- Advise your customers to check regularly that the temperature of their refrigerator is between 0°C and 4°C.

By following these guidelines, you will help to keep you and your customers safe.

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For further information and advice, please contact the Marketing Department on:

01908 844107