

# FRESH PORK



**TASTE WHAT PORK CAN DO.®**

A nutrient-dense choice for school menus

## What makes fresh pork special?

- **Helps meet protein needs** – Fresh pork’s high protein content can help meet National School Breakfast and Lunch Program meal pattern requirements while staying within saturated fat and sodium limits, and may help keep students full.<sup>1</sup>
- **Provides essential vitamins & minerals** – Fresh pork is a source of more than 10 essential nutrients for K-12 students, including thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, vitamins B6 and B12, choline, zinc, phosphorus and selenium.<sup>2</sup>
- **Fits into kid-friendly dietary patterns** – The Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the American Heart Association include lean meats such as pork in healthy, kid-friendly eating patterns.<sup>3,4</sup> Fresh pork offers numerous health benefits across the lifespan when eaten as part of a balanced dietary pattern.<sup>5</sup>
- **Encourages healthy eating** – The world of flavors in fresh pork makes it a great “carrier food,” helping children add more under-consumed food groups (like vegetables, beans and whole grains) and nutrients (like choline, iron and potassium) to their tray.<sup>6</sup>

10+ essential nutrients.

Provides key nutrients that support growth, energy metabolism and overall health in children.

Pork “carries” nine essential nutrients for children.

PROTEIN	ESTIMATED PRICE/LB	PACK SIZE	SERVING SIZE	MEAT/MEAT ALTERNATE	CALORIES	PROTEIN	TOTAL FAT	SATURATED FAT	CHOLESTEROL	SODIUM
100173 - Pork, Leg Roast, Raw, Frozen	\$2.05	36-42 lb case	1 oz	1	47	8	1	0	24	23
100139 - Pork, Coarse Ground, Cooked, Canned	\$2.09	24 oz can	2 oz	2	120	9	8	3	35	150
100184 - Ham, 97% Fat-Free, Cooked, Whole	\$2.09	4/10 lb hams	1.22 oz	1	37	5	2	1	18	232
110730 - Pork, Pulled, Cooked, Frozen	\$2.71	8/5 lb bag	2 oz	1	92	11	5	2	36	202
110851 - Alaska Pollock Fish Sticks	\$2.40	8/5 or 4/10 lb bag	2 oz	1	105	6	5	1	20	200
100121 - Turkey, Deli Breast	\$3.76	4/10 lb logs	1.59 oz	1	56	9	2	1	28	269
111881 - Chicken, Pulled, Cooked, Frozen	\$4.12	6/5 lb or 3/10 lb bag	2 oz	2	72	12	2	1	39	215
100127 - Beef, Coarse Ground, Cooked, Canned	\$5.16	24 oz can	2 oz	2	120	10	8	4	35	150
110711 - Beef, Patties, Cooked, Frozen	\$5.91	40 lb case	1 patty (62 g)	2	130	11	8	4	45	200

Several pork options can contribute to the Meat/Meat Alternate (M/MA) meal pattern requirements, supporting flexible menu planning.

By integrating pork into school menus, you help ensure that meals are not only tasty, but also packed with the nutrients needed to fuel learning and play.

## Addressing common questions about pork

Serving pork in school meals helps children meet nutrient needs while enjoying familiar, flavorful dishes. Supporting U.S. pork farmers means supporting local economies and sustainable farming practices. Schools that choose U.S. pork are making a commitment to fresh, nutritious meals that directly benefit both their students and their communities.

### Why pork works in school menus

- ✓ Contributes to M/MA requirements
- ✓ Cost-effective vs. other meats, poultry or fish
- ✓ Versatile across cuisines
- ✓ Works in familiar formats (tacos, bowls, sandwiches)

### Is pork affordable?

- Yes! Pork is one of the most cost-effective meats in the 2026-2027 USDA Foods Available List and also the USDA Thrifty Food Plan – a model for the lowest-cost healthy diet.<sup>7</sup>
- Familiar, flavorful pork dishes can help increase participation and reduce plate waste when paired with student-preferred formats.

The cost per 50 g of protein is lower for pork than for many other types of meat, poultry or fish.<sup>8</sup>

### What about cultural or religious restrictions?

- Some students do not eat pork for cultural or religious reasons. But as one of the most widely consumed proteins worldwide, pork features more than 110 unique flavor notes.<sup>8</sup> It appears in global dishes from tacos al pastor and barbecue pulled pork to Korean bulgogi and dumplings.
- Serving pork helps diversify menus and can encourage students to eat more of the food groups that are already under-consumed but crucial for supporting growth and development.



110+ flavors

### How do we get pork for our menus?

- Procure pork by ordering from the USDA Foods Available List. There are seven pork options available in school year 2026-2027.
- Whether your district procures foods independently or through a distributor rather than exclusively through USDA, you can take full advantage of the National Pork Board's digital recipe book that showcases how versatile fresh pork can be in school menus.
- Pork fits within USDA school meal nutrition standards when prepared using approved methods.



View the [USDA Food Buying Guide](#).



Download NPB's digital recipe book for 20 recipes developed for K-12 kitchens.

### How can I apply food safety measures to pork?

- Follow USDA cooking guidelines: cook chops, roasts and steaks to 145° F (63° C) and allow a three-minute rest; cook ground pork to 160° F (71° C).
- Practice good kitchen hygiene by storing pork safely, avoiding cross contamination and using a thermometer.
- A 2024 USDA study sampled more than 3.2 million pigs and found zero cases of Trichinella infection.<sup>9</sup> Modern production practices have virtually eliminated this parasite.
- America's pork farmers are dedicated to animal welfare and responsible care, and do not use growth-promoting hormones or medically important antibiotics for growth promotion.



For procurement and local sourcing guidance, contact the NPB.



**PORK & PARTNERS**

<sup>1</sup>International Journal of Obesity. 2015;39(9):1421-1424. <sup>2</sup>Pork NDB# 10061, Pork Tenderloin. <sup>3</sup>2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. HHS/USDA website. Realfood.gov. Accessed March 19, 2026. <sup>4</sup>Heart-Check Foods. AHA website. [heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/heart-check-foods](https://heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/heart-check-foods). Accessed March 19, 2026. <sup>5</sup>Pork and chronic disease. NPB website. [pork.org/porkandpartners/resources/pork-and-chronic-disease/](https://pork.org/porkandpartners/resources/pork-and-chronic-disease/). Accessed March 19, 2026. <sup>6</sup>Nutrients. 2023;15(10):2293. <sup>7</sup>Nutrients. 2023;15(8):1897. <sup>8</sup>Ankersen, Lisbeth. Comprehensive Sensory and Flavor Nuances of Pork Protein and Fat. NPB website. [porkcheckoff.org/research/comprehensive-sensory-and-flavor-nuances-of-pork-protein-and-fat/](https://porkcheckoff.org/research/comprehensive-sensory-and-flavor-nuances-of-pork-protein-and-fat/). Updated March 22, 2024. Accessed March 19, 2026. <sup>9</sup>Food and Waterborne Parasitology. 2024;36:e00238.