

Comparing labels

With the former meat labeling system, information was listed in this order:

- 1) Species
- 2) Primal
- 3) Subprimal
- 4) Bone in or boneless
- 5) Thick or thin



The new labeling system has three basic components:

- 1) Common name
- 2) Combined description by species, bone in or boneless and the primal or subprimal name
- 3) Cooking instructions

New



As an example, the popular flat iron steak under the previous labeling system would have been listed as “beef shoulder top blade steak boneless flat iron.” Then cooking instructions may or may not have been listed.

Going forward, consumers will simply see three lines on the label:

Flat Iron Steak
Beef Top Blade, Boneless
Grill for best results

New and Improved

Meat cut names will be simplified on beef and pork packages starting this summer.

by Kindra Gordon

With grilling season heating up, the U.S. meat industry is simplifying the names of various cuts of meat on packages in grocery stores.

Called the Uniform Retail Meat Identification Standards, or URMIS, the change aims to simplify red meat cuts by adopting descriptions of cuts with which people are already familiar from restaurant menus. The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) and the National Pork Board advocated this change to more consumer-friendly and less anatomically focused names. And, the change was recently approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It is hoped these name changes will “increase consumer confidence by simplifying common names for meat and offer shoppers consistent, easy-to-follow preparation instructions,” according to a statement on the URMIS website.

Some of the name changes consumers can expect to see on meat packages at the grocery store include “boneless shoulder top blade steak,” now labeled as “flat iron steak.” The “beef under blade boneless steak” will be labeled as a “Denver steak.” “Pork butt” gets the more dignified “Boston roast” and “top sirloin” is now “coulette.”

The changes are based on two years of consumer research and are expected to affect about 350 cuts of meat. From the research data, more than 60% of consumers in the research project said they would try new cuts with this new naming system, and 67% said they would find and go to a store which used this system.

It is the first major overhaul of meat industry nomenclature in four decades.

Meat-industry officials explain that the previous labeling in the meat section with names like “beef

shoulder top blade steak” was too puzzling for consumers, sending shoppers looking for a more familiar-named cut.

The update to URMIS is “about eliminating some of those meat-industry butcher terms that may be confusing or unappealing,” NCBA spokesman Trevor Amen said in a statement. “We just really want to make it simplified for the consumer when they’re shopping.”

The new nomenclature was expected in stores by July. While following the URMIS guidelines is strictly voluntary, most U.S. retailers typically use them.

For traditionalists, labels will feature the old and new names. And, ground beef will still be called ground beef.

To compare the new names to the previous meat cut names, visit meattrack.com and click on the button labeled “beef common name list.” **HW**