

# New Meat Labeling System Unveiled

The meat industry has announced a new standardized identification-labeling program designed to reduce shopper confusion and help consumers make wiser, more economical buying decisions.

The National Live Stock and Meat Board, an industry association, coordinated the voluntary 16-month meat trade project. President David H. Stroud of the Meat Board told a press conference that "the new nationwide system may be the most significant meat counter improvement since the introduction of self-service nearly four decades ago."

The new program promises benefits for the marketer as well as the consumer, Stroud said. The names for various cuts of beef, pork and lamb sold in U. S. food stores have been reduced from more than 1,000 to about 300.

Basically, the meat industry's

new system of uniform labeling means a Beef Rib Eye Steak is a Beef Rib Eye Steak - - not a 'Delmonico steak' at one place, a 'Filet steak' someplace else, or a 'Spencer steak' or 'Beauty steak' in still other stores, depending on where you live in the U. S. - - or even where you shop in the same city.

According to the Meat Board, 51-year-old meat industry authority, each cut is labeled by a uniform method. The label will show, first, the species of meat (beef, veal, pork, lamb); second the primal area (or so-called wholesale cut) from which the retail cut was derived - - breast (brisket), shoulder (chuck) arm, shoulder (chuck) blade, rib, loin, sirloin (hip) and leg (round) - - and finally, the recommended retail name. Thus in the example cited above, you would have the species, "Beef"; the primal cut, "Rib"; and the recommended retail name "Eye Steak" - - with the label reading:

**BEEF RIB  
EYE STEAK**

"While the primary purpose of this program is to reduce the confusing variety of names that

confront meat shoppers in different stores, there are instances where complete elimination of previously familiar names might actually add to customer confusion," said H. Kenneth Johnson, Meat Board Merchandising Director. "There are a number of names which have become accepted through localized tradition or which have been customized for individual store or chain identity . . . but which are not widely enough used throughout the country to become the standard identification."

For instance, when a retailer in New England adopts the program and discovers his ever-popular "California Roast" should be labeled by another name, he can use both names. The correct consumer identification would appear on the regular price-weight label:

**BEEF CHUCK  
UNDER BLADE ROAST**

Then, if he wants, he can add "California Roast" to the label or on a separate sticker to call customer attention to the cut's old name.

By adding the locally familiar name to the newly-adopted standard name, the retailer can assure his customers he's still handling the same quality and variety of cuts that he always did - - but with a more definitive system of identification from now on, Johnson noted.

In developing this meat identity program, any name other than an accepted generic anatomical label was considered a "fanciful" name and, with a few exceptions, these are not recommended for use on the label.

"Such handles as 'Patio Roast,' 'Pop-up Steak,' 'Paradise Roast,' 'Chuckwagon Cut,' 'Smoked Callie,' 'Ranch Bacon,' 'London Broil' and 'His-and-Her Steaks' have been the root of meat counter confusion and are excluded from the recommended list," said Johnson. "Not only are such names not definitive, but in some instances, the same name is used to label different cuts of

meat in different parts of the country - - which is extremely frustrating to people who move from one section of the nation to another.

"We've even been accused of deliberately deceiving unwary consumers," Johnson said. "I suppose there's been some of that, but it was minimal, I'm certain. In any event, it's now to be eliminated."

There are a few exceptions to the rule, however, where some names, while not anatomical, are so widely accepted that they are traditional here and abroad. Thus you will continue to find "Porterhouse Steak," and "Filet Mignon" in the beef category, "Butterfly Loin Chops" among the pork cuts and "French-style Chops" in the lamb counter.

Fanciful, strictly regional or potentially misleading names have been replaced by others with more specific meaning to the average shopper. The program also includes descriptive labels, informative point-of-purchase materials, and special booklets for distribution through retail meat outlets.

Joining Stroud in the meat identity program kick-off presentation were Harry Beckner, President, Jewel Food Stores, Melrose Park, Ill.; J. W. (Pete) Reece, Meat Merchandising and Procurement Director of the Fleming Company, Topeka, Kansas; Ken Fedor, Administrator, Office of Food, Cost of Living Council, Washington, D. C.; H. Kenneth Johnson, Meat Board Merchandising Director and Reba Staggs, Meat Board Home Economics Director.

The master list now becomes an official name guide for universal adoption by meat retailers.

Among other consumer benefits expected from the new system is a guarantee that such vaguely named or misnamed meat cuts as "Paradise Roast" will be happily lost - - but not lamented - - to consumer view.

The distillation of meat cut names was achieved by an Industry-wide Cooperative Meat Identification Standards Committee, of which Mr. Reece is Chairman. The group is made up of executives of retail and meat packing-processing companies and their industry trade organizations, with assistance from the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, White House Office for Consumer Affairs and the Council of Better Business Bureaus.

Today's Meat Board announcement was timed to the publication of the new Uniform Retail Meat Identity Standards Manual and supporting materials for retail food outlets throughout the country. The manual includes the illustrated master list of recommended names plus other chapters dealing with shopper concern and retail selling practices.

According to Stroud, participating retailers are in the process of phasing out the often confusing array of names by which many meats are called. "The name list seemed endless," Stroud said. "It has proliferated to awesome proportions, particularly since the end of World War II. The merchandising ingenuity of the extremely competitive meat retailing business is partly responsible.

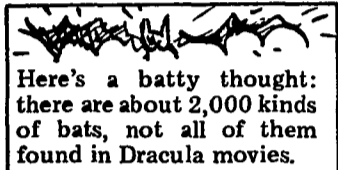
"But once this new system gets into full operation, each cut will carry the same name wherever you buy it in the country."

The Standards Committee spent more than a year preparing the master list of uniform meat cut names. Committee members represent large and small independent and chain grocery and packer-processor operations of wide geographic distribution. They combed through more than 1,000 commonly used names to determine which single name best suited each of the roughly 300 cuts sold in the nation's food stores. (The list of fresh cuts of beef, veal, pork and lamb does not include the more than 250 varieties of sausage also available.)


Not only will the names on the meat package labels be uniform throughout the U. S., but most stores participating in the program will display illustrated identification charts, plus other descriptive material on the new meat labeling system. The charts show the carcass, primal cuts and location and names of most retail cuts, along with cookery recommendations.

What about the stores which do not join the program?


"We've tried to reach them all with information on the program and its benefits both to the consumer and retailer," answered Stroud. "But it's a huge industry. We've probably missed some - - but they'll learn about it either from us or from their customers. As I said, it's a highly competitive industry. It's unlikely that many firms will consciously give a merchandising edge to the competition in the area of customer good will."



Here's a batty thought: there are about 2,000 kinds of bats, not all of them found in Dracula movies.



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