

Ever wonder what those labels on meats mean? What's the difference between all natural and organic, sustainable and pasture raised? Here are some common meat labels and their definitions, taken from the "Glossary of Meat Production Methods" from sustainabletable.org, to help you understand what's behind the meat you're ordering from Idaho's Bounty!

NATURAL: These meats should not have any added artificial flavoring, color ingredients, chemical preservatives, or artificial or synthetic ingredients, & should be only "minimally processed"—defined by the USDA as a process that does not fundamentally alter the raw product. "Natural" has no bearing on the way the animal was raised or the food & additives it was fed.

BIODYNAMIC: Biodynamic farmers work in harmony with nature and treat the farm as an interrelated whole. They use a variety of techniques, such as crop rotation and on-farm composting, to foster a sustainable and productive environment. Food labeled "biodynamic" must be certified by an independent third party.

SUSTAINABLE: There's no hard and fast definition, but truly sustainable foods are raised locally by family farmers who promote the health of their animals, land and local communities.

NO ADDED HORMONES: Animals were raised without added growth hormones. By law, hogs and poultry cannot be given hormones — so the use of the label on these meats is mere advertising.

NO ANTIBIOTIC USE: No antibiotics were administered to the animal during its lifetime. If an animal becomes sick, and needs antibiotics, it cannot be sold under this label.

PASTURE-RAISED: In general, pasturing is a traditional farming technique where animals are raised outdoors in a humane, ecologically sustainable manner and eat foods that nature intended them to eat.

SOURCE VERIFIED: An animal is assigned an ID number at birth that allows it to be traced through its life, slaughter and sale. Source verification also tracks health records, feed records and genetic history. This system does not indicate whether the animal was raised sustainably by local farmers.

NON-CONFINED: Animals were not confined in a feedlot, and had continuous access to the outside throughout their lifecycle. This does not actually mean that the animals went outside.

NO MEAT/ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS: This label should indicate that the animals were raised on feed that contained no animal byproducts (beaks, bones, tails, etc.). However, unlike the organic label, this claim is not verified by any third party source.



100% VEGETARIAN FEED: Animals are not fed any animal byproducts. This does not guarantee that they were raised outdoors or on pasture, but it should indicate that they were raised on grasses, hay, silage and other feed found on pasture or in a field. This label does not reveal whether the animals were fed supplements or additives.

ARTISAN MEATS: Artisan butchers use traditional methods of butchering, curing, and preparing meats which lend themselves to working by hand to get the tastiest flavor out of a piece of meat. For this reason, artisan butchers often have close relationships with local farmers to ensure that, from farm to plate, their products are of the highest possible quality.

DRY AGED: Dry aged means that meat, most often beef, is aged in a refrigerated cooler at a certain temperature for up to a month. Cold dry aging allows moisture to evaporate from the meat, which concentrates the flavor. At the same time, natural enzymes in the meat break down fibrous and connective tissue – ensuring that the meat will be as tender as possible.

GRASS-FED: These animals eat grasses from weaning to slaughter (most grass-fed animals are pasture-raised, some may still be confined). Their diet should not be supplemented with grain, animal byproducts, or synthetic hormones. They should not be given antibiotics to promote growth or prevent disease (though they may be given antibiotics to treat disease). Note that "grass-fed" does not guarantee that the animal was pastured or pasture-raised.

And these aren't all! View and print the full guide from Sustainable Table to refer to when purchasing meats. When ordering meat from Idaho's Bounty, don't forget to check out the producer's page or contact them.

Imagine . . .

Knowing where your food comes from, who is producing it, and their ethics and farming practices

Working in support of the health of your local community food shed where energy stays local and supports our rural economy