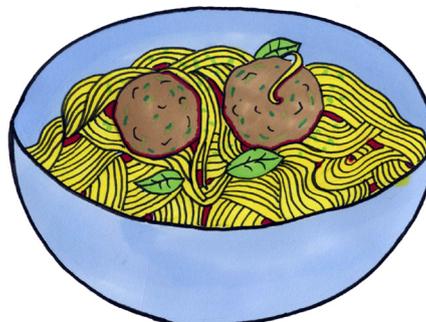


ALL ABOUT MINCE



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Minced meat is simply meat that has been passed through a mincing machine to break it down into smaller pieces. Mince can be used for all sorts of wonderful dishes like burgers, meatballs, pie fillings or pasta sauces. You can mince virtually any type of meat and you'll find beef, lamb, pork, and turkey mince sold in supermarkets and butcher shops throughout the UK.



Jamie says, *“Mince is cheap, tasty, and brilliantly versatile. If you get creative with your flavourings, it will never ever be boring.”*

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MINCE

After an animal is slaughtered, it is divided into different parts or ‘cuts’ for us to buy (see *Cuts of pork*, *Cuts of lamb*, *Cuts of beef*). Some of these cuts are considered ‘the best bits’, which is why we pay more for the likes of pork tenderloin, pork chops, or beef rib-eye steaks. Meat manufacturers and butchers don’t usually mince those cuts because people like to buy and cook them whole, and will pay more for them. Instead, they mince meat from cheaper cuts. The quality of the meat used for mince varies so the best thing you can do is check the label for fat content, type and nutritional info (see *Mince and Nutrition*).

The most common variety of mince sold in UK supermarkets is beef, but you can make delicious dishes with other types of mince: try using turkey mince in a chilli, lamb mince to make beautiful barbecue skewers or a combo of beef and pork mince in meatballs. If you’re looking for a break from meat completely, you can even buy vegetarian mince made from ground soya beans (see *Protein and all things vegetarian*)!

WHAT GOES INTO BEEF MINCE?

Mince from a butcher

If you’re getting mince from a butcher, it’s likely to be made from cheaper cuts like chuck steak, from the front shoulders of the cow, and flank, from the cow’s belly. It will also probably include trimmings of meat from steaks, roasting joints and other, more expensive cuts (see *Cuts of beef*). The butcher will also make sure that there’s a percentage of fat in the mince because it needs a certain amount to give it moisture and flavour as it cooks.

If you prefer to know exactly what sort of meat is going into your mince, choose a piece of meat and ask your butcher to make you a fresh batch right then and there.

Most good butchers will be more than happy to do this. Again, chuck steak from the shoulder is a good cut to ask for if you do this; it's fairly cheap and has a great flavour.

Mince from the supermarket

The minced beef you find in supermarkets is generally made from shoulder and flank, too. Unlike the mince from the butchers, it won't contain any extra trimmings. It is sold in several different grades, and the key difference between these grades is the fat content of the meat.

Fat adds flavour and keeps the meat nice and moist as it cooks, so you do need a certain amount of it in your mince. However, if you are cooking with cheap mince that has a high percentage of fat, it's a good idea to drain off any excess fat at the end of cooking.

Standard supermarket beef mince in the UK contains about 20% fat. This might sound like a lot, but that's more or less the average amount of fat you'd find on any piece of beef.

Lean and extra-lean mince can have as little as 10% fat. This is great for making healthier alternatives of your favourite meals; whether it's drier recipes such as meatballs or burgers, or for wetter recipes, such as stews, chilli or pie fillings where there is plenty of liquid to make up for the lack of moisture from fat.



You will also find some very cheap 'economy' packs of mince available in the supermarket. These can be sold fresh or frozen and can contain up to 30% fat (although the exact percentage does vary between different brands and supermarkets).

As well as these grades, you'll also notice that organic mince is widely available now. This means the animals used for the meat have been reared according to organic standards. Under organic rules, all aspects of animal welfare is tightly controlled, including rearing, shelter, feeding, transportation and slaughter.

When you're shopping for mince, it's worth remembering you get what you pay for.