

How to Cook Bison Meat

The Basics

Bison or buffalo meat is similar to beef and is cooked in much the same way. The taste is often indistinguishable from beef, although bison tends to have a fuller, richer (sweeter) flavor. It is not “gamey” or wild tasting. Expect bison meat to be darker red than beef. Bison is very low in fat and cholesterol, and is high in protein, vitamins and minerals.

The leanness ensures that bison meat will cook faster. Fat acts as an insulator—heat must first penetrate this insulation before the cooking process begins. Marbling (fat within the muscle) aids in slowing down the cooking process. Since buffalo meat lacks marbling, the meat will cook more rapidly. Caution must be taken to insure NOT OVER-COOKING bison.

Preparing Bison Meat

Preparing bison meat is comparable to preparing other lean meats. Food safety techniques should be followed. Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling raw bison meat. Use separate cooking utensils and plates for raw and cooked bison meat.

Bison meat can be cooked much like lean beef but generally is cooked at a lower temperature or for a longer time than typical cuts of beef. Since bison is lower in fat than other red meats, it is easier to overcook. Ground bison meat should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160°F and the juices should be clear, not red. Roasts and steaks should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145° F (medium rare) or 160°F (medium). The oven should be set at around 275°F. After cooking, eat the meat within three to four days, storing in the refrigerator. For best quality, cook ground bison within two days of purchase, and steaks and roasts within three to five days; otherwise, the meat should be

frozen for future use. Bison meat can be kept in the freezer for one year if properly packaged, double paper wrapped or vacuum sealed. If using zip top freezer bags, bison can be stored for 3 months. Bison meat can be substituted for beef in recipes. The National Bison Association has additional cooking tips and recipes available on its web site: www.bisoncentral.com.

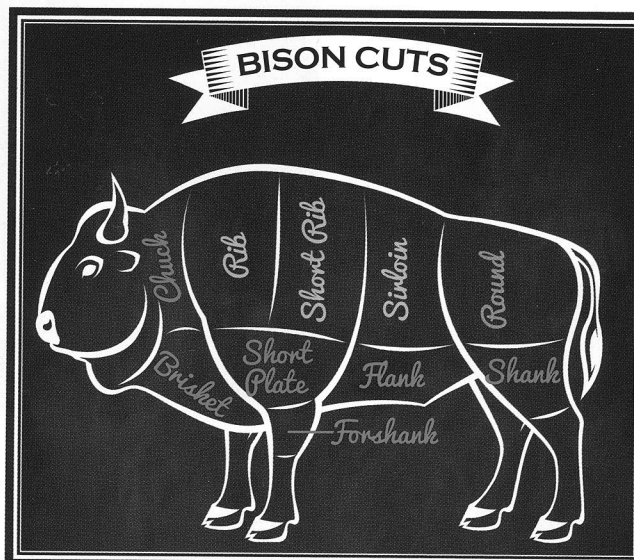
Replace Beef With Bison in Your Favorite Recipes and Follow These Guidelines:

- When oven broiling, move your broiler rack away from the heat about a notch lower than where you normally broil beef steaks. Expect a buffalo steak to cook one-third faster than a beef steak. Bison steaks are

best when cooked rare to medium to maintain the moisture and flavor of the meat. It is not recommended to cook buffalo meat past medium. However, if you prefer your steak to this degree of doneness, be aware that your buffalo steak may lose some of its desirable attributes.

- If you normally cook roast beef at 325°F, turn your oven temperature down to around 275°F for bison. Plan on the roast being done in about the same amount of time as with a comparable size beef roast. To ensure the temperature you prefer, we recommend using a meat thermometer indicating the internal temperature. Again, rare to medium rare is recommended.

- Ground bison is also leaner (ranging from 90-95% lean). It will cook faster so precautions must be taken to not dry out the meat by overcooking it. There is little shrinkage with bison burger—what you put in the pan raw will be close to the same amount after you cook it. Pre-formed patties tend to dry out just a little faster when grilling. (Hint: the thicker the patty, the juicier the burger). Medium-rare to medium is best. Although ground buffalo meat is leaner, there is no need to add fat to keep it from sticking to the pan or falling apart. ■



Most Tender Cuts-

Tenderloin, Strip Loin, Rib and Rib Eye, Top Sirloin.

Cooking method: dry heat

Medium Tender-

Back Ribs, Bottom Sirloin, Sirloin Tip, Top Round, Bottom Round, Eye of Round, Skirt

Cooking method: combination of dry and moist heat

Less Tender-

Chuck, Brisket, Flank, Shoulder Clod, Short Ribs, Stew Meat.

Cooking method: moist heat

Broiling /Grilling: Steaks from the Tenderloin, Rib, Short Loin, Sirloin and Ground Meat. Start with a hot grill, cook hot and fast.

Braising: Roasts cut from the Round, Fore Shank, Chuck or Flank. Moist heat cooking, using larger amounts of liquid and low heat.

Pan frying: Cubed or marinated steaks.

Marinating: Cubed meat or roasts that are not from the Rib or Loins.

Cooking in Liquid: Fore Shank, Brisket, and Chuck, and cuts with little meat and a lot of bone (Back Ribs, Short Ribs).

Good, Clean Fair Food, Continued
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interest, yet they still want convenience and cheaper foods. Instead of walking through the grocery store thoughtfully, young people generally say they hate grocery shopping. We need to raise food higher on our priority lists. We need to plan better by stocking our freezers with good quality meat around which to build a meal."

Nowack encourages people to take time to buy and prepare good food and to share meals with family and friends.

"We've never had more food and recipes at our fingertips, and people can be more connected than ever to their food," said Nowack. "They just need to slow down, turn off their televisions and get connected. We need to view mealtime as a social event."

Slow Food encourages people to buy at farmers' markets and visit farmers. "The challenge is to filter out all the 'noise' and focus on food." Nowack notes he has enjoyed visiting Prairie Ridge Buffalo Ranch, near Limon, Colo.

Whether young or old, consumers on a budget must plan carefully and set priorities to be able to incorporate bison into their menus.

"Price is a factor," said Nowack. "CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) programs allow people to buy cheaper per unit, but it can also be a large, one-time investment. Some people stretch their budgets by sharing a share. At the end of the day, you have to put a value on the food you eat and how it contributes to your health. Clean and fair meat is better for your body and for the environment. If you value that, you might have to shift funds to quality eating over the daily barista coffee."

Nowack also encourages budget conscious consumers to look for sales and to buy when supply is high and prices less. Buying in bulk is also good when buyers have saved up to make the one-time-per-year purchase. I have not done a cost analysis, but my sense is I save money buying this way, if for no other reason because I make fewer trips to the grocery store."

One final suggestion from Nowack on budgeting for bison: "Eat higher quality food but less of it. Have a nice piece of bison, and then fill up your plate with good side dishes. I realize raising animals 'good, clean and fair' requires more input costs, but it does not have to be an elitist item." ■

BISON

Eat Healthy - Eat Gourmet

Gourmet isn't necessarily healthy and healthy eating more often than not is not considered gourmet. But, when eating bison, it is easy to be both gourmet and healthy. So, whether you eat bison filet mignon—one of the most tender and flavorful pieces of meat on the planet—or bison tacos, bison is both healthy and gourmet.

The nutrition chart below shows bison as an excellent, low-fat source of protein, iron and vitamin B-12. To take the healthy aspect of bison a step further, incorporate bone broth into your diet. Unlike the cans of sodium-packed, meat "flavored" broth on grocery store aisles, homemade bone broth is healthy and economical. It is made from all the left over bones, which works well especially when buying bison in bulk, as outlined in the article that starts on the previous page. Bone broth can be used in all kinds of gourmet soups and dishes. For directions to make bison bone broth, see page 13.

Health Benefits of Bison Bone Broth

- **Heal And Seal Your Intestines.** The gelatin in bone broth helps seal holes in intestines. This helps with chronic diarrhea, constipation, and even some food intolerances.
- **Protect your joints.** Better than taking glucosamine supplements.
- **Look younger.** Bone broth is packed with collagen, commonly used in beauty treatments.
- **Get Better Sleep.** Glycine in bone broth promotes better sleep and improves memory.
- **Strengthen your immune system.** Bone marrow has a high concentration of minerals, essential to immune system health.
- **Strengthen your bones.** Calcium, phosphorus and magnesium in bone broth are the foundation for strong bones.

Read more about bone broth health benefits:

<http://www.shape.com/healthy-eating/cooking-ideas/8-reasons-try-bone-broth>
<http://undergroundwellness.com/top-5-reasons-why-bone-broth-is-the-bomb/>

NUTRITIONAL COMPARISONS						
Per 100 Gram (3.5 oz.) Serving – Cooked Meat – Updated January 2013						
SPECIES	FAT g	PROTEIN g	CALORIES kcal	CHOLESTEROL mg	IRON mg	VITAMIN B-12 mcg
BISON	2.42	28.44	143	82	3.42	2.86
Beef (Choice)	18.54	27.21	283	87	2.72	2.50
Beef (Select)	8.09	29.89	201	86	2.99	2.64
Pork	9.21	27.51	201	84	1.0	0.68
Chicken (Skinless)	7.41	28.93	190	89	1.21	0.33
Sockeye Salmon	6.69	25.40	169	84	0.50	5.67

(Per 100 grams of cooked lean meat with visible fat removed)
From the USDA Nutrient Data Laboratory - www.ndb.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/