

Butchering Pork

Break down a pig carcass into the full range of cuts

DIFFICULTY Moderate–hard
TYPE One-off task per animal
TIME 1.5–3 hours per carcass



DIFFICULTY
Moderate–hard



TIME
1.5–3 hrs



COST
Low (knives)
once set up



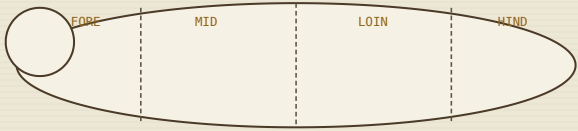
BEST SEASON
Cooler weather
strongly
preferred



FREQUENCY
As animals reach
processing age

01 A carcass with more primal variety

Pork breaks down into a particularly wide range of primal cuts — shoulder, loin, belly, leg (ham), and more — offering scope for fresh cuts, curing, and small goods all from the one animal.



broken down into primal sections first

02 What you'll need

- A sharp boning knife and a butcher's saw for bone
- A stable, clean work surface and hanging/support method
- Curing supplies if processing belly (bacon) or leg (ham) beyond fresh cuts
- Meat-safe wrap or containers for fresh cuts

04 Troubleshooting

- **Uncertain which cuts suit curing vs fresh use** — belly and leg are the classic curing cuts (bacon and ham respectively); loin and shoulder work well fresh or for sausages.
- **Carcass warming up during a long session** — pork spoils faster than some other meats in warm conditions; work in cool weather or a cooled space, and don't rush but don't dawdle either.
- **Wasting valuable fat** — pork back fat and leaf fat are prized for cooking and rendering; set them aside deliberately rather than trimming to waste.
- **Difficulty finding pork-specific cut guidance** — pork cut names and uses differ somewhat from lamb or beef; reference pork-specific diagrams rather than assuming cross-species consistency.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Curing & Smoking Meat

Making Sausages & Small Goods

Rendering Fat (Tallow & Lard)

COMMON MISTAKES

Trimming and discarding valuable back fat and leaf fat

Processing in warm conditions without adequate cooling, risking spoilage

PRO TIP

Pork is the most versatile carcass for a homestead processing a single animal into fresh cuts, cured products, and sausages all at once.

03 Method

1. Hang or support the carcass securely for initial breakdown.
2. Separate into primals: shoulder, loin, belly, and leg, plus head and trotters if using them.
3. Decide which cuts go fresh, which are set aside for curing (belly for bacon, leg for ham), and which go to sausage/mince.
4. Trim fat thoughtfully — pork fat (back fat and leaf lard) has real value for cooking and rendering, so don't discard it automatically.
5. Wrap, chill, or move cuts into curing promptly.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	Cooler weather is strongly preferred given pork's relatively fast spoilage rate in warm conditions.
DURATION	1.5–3 hours depending on how many cuts are being separated out versus kept as larger primals.
MAINTENANCE	Not applicable per event.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	A full range of cuts sorted appropriately between fresh use, curing, and sausage-making, with fat set aside deliberately.