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[Guide to Meat: Storing Your Lobel's of New York Selections at Home](#)

Storing your Lobel's Selections at Home

The way you care for meat at home is as important as the way Lobel's of New York takes care of it before you buy it. It is important to know how to keep meat fresh in your refrigerator and how to store it in the freezer.

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Storing Fresh Meat

Your order from Lobel's of New York is vacuum-sealed in air-tight, Cryovac packages so that it can be transported safely. Kept in this package, the meat will stay fresh in your refrigerator for at least one week.

Refrigerate meat you buy from a butcher shop in a loose wrapping, preferably the original butcher shop wrapping. Simply loosen the ends so that the meat can breathe. Don't use plastic bags or plastic wrap to repack meat you plan to store in the refrigerator. This decreases the partial surface drying that increases the meat's keeping quality.

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Storing Leftovers

Leftover meat and gravy should not be refrigerated for more than two days. Cooked meat retains its quality best when left in large pieces, even if bones have been removed. Small sections will dry up more quickly.

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Freezing and Defrosting: Home Freezing

Cut fresh meat into the individual pieces you plan to cook. Wrap the meat in moisture- and vapor-proof plastic, making certain each piece is wrapped tightly to seal out air and seal in moisture. Proper wrapping for the freezer is important in order to avoid freezer burn. Freezer burn results when air penetrates the package and moisture is drawn from the surface of the meat.

Don't use the ice-cube compartment of your refrigerator as a freezer. The temperature required to make ice cubes is 32 degrees F, while the temperature of your freezer should not be above 0 degrees F.

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Storage Time for Freezing

The temperature in your freezer should be 0 degrees F or below. Beef will be safe in this temperature range for six months. Lamb and veal should be used within three to six months. Pork should be used within two to three months.

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Labeling Packages for the Freezer

Write the date on every package of meat you freeze. For convenience, include the cut of meat and its weight on the label.

Caution: Never, ever refreeze meat that has been even slightly thawed.

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Transporting Frozen Meat

Wrap packaged, frozen meat in layers of newspaper and then place in a cooler. The meat should remain stiffly frozen for four to six hours. By insulating the meat with newspaper, you can safely transport it to your vacation house.

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Defrosting Meat

All meat must be at room temperature before cooking. A freezer full of meat can make you feel secure about planning a dinner, but you must remember to order from your freezer, as if buying fresh meat from a butcher.

Defrosting time depends on the size of the cut of meat.

Defrosting Times



Your Lobel's order is delivered fresh, never frozen. You can cook your meat selection right away, keep it refrigerated in its airtight package for about a week, or freeze it.

We suggest you follow the directions for proper storage, which are detailed here.

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Defrosting Times	
Small Chops	Place on the lower rack of the refrigerator on the morning of the dinner. About four hours before cooking time, put the chops on the kitchen counter to finish thawing and reach room temperature.
Large Steaks	A big steak, such as a two-inch porterhouse, should be placed on the lowest rack of the refrigerator at dinnertime the night before. If the steak is still frozen in the morning, take it out of the refrigerator around noon and put it on the kitchen counter to finish thawing.
Roasts	Allow a large roast to "rest" in your refrigerator for a couple of days. Then bring it to room temperature early on the morning of the day you will be roasting.

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Defrosting Meat in the Microwave

Lobel's of New York *does not recommend* defrosting meat in the microwave oven. The microwave usually defrosts unevenly, cooking the meat on the outside while it is still thawing inside. If you absolutely must use the microwave, defrost the meat only 75 percent, so that it is still partially frozen. Then wrap tightly in plastic wrap and let the meat finish thawing and reach room temperature on the counter. Do not use the microwave to defrost small pieces of meat, as they will dry out.

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Selecting the Best Meat

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Prime Meat — The best choice for every recipe

The quality of meat is the same in every section of the animal's carcass. A prime steer yields all prime cuts. The same is true for the choice and select grades.

Prime quality beef has better flavor and texture — this includes the less expensive cuts chosen for pot roasts, stews and casseroles. Even in variety cuts such as oxtails, sweetbreads and calves' brains, the quality of the meat affects the taste of the final dish.

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"Good Advice, Right From the Butcher"

— The New York Times

August 18, 1999

review of "Prime Time"

by the Lobels

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Dry Aging — The key to perfect flavor and tenderness

Lobel's of New York dry ages all of its fresh USDA Prime meat to perfection by holding it in coolers at a temperature of 34-38 degrees F. We age beef for four to six weeks. Veal and lamb are young, delicate and tender, and are hung in our coolers for no more than a week.

Aging produces beef that is naturally tender and flavorful. Nothing the cook does to add flavor in the kitchen is a substitute for starting with properly aged meat.

There are two types of aging: Dry aging and wet aging. Dry aging is the choice of the discriminating chef. The wet aging process involves sealing meat in airtight Cryovac bags. Wet aging does less to enhance flavor and tenderness than dry aging.

Dry-aged meat is increasingly difficult to find because the process is expensive and time-intensive. During dry aging, the meat's natural enzymes act as a tenderizer, breaking down the connective tissue that holds the muscles. At the same time, the evaporation of moisture improves texture. Dry aging continues until a thin coating develops on the meat surface. The coating seals in flavor and juices during aging, and is then trimmed off. Loss of weight results from the evaporation of moisture and from trimming, and both of these processes add to the cost of dry aging meat.

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Color and Texture

Beef

Look for beef with a minimum of outer fat. The fat should be creamy in color. The bones should be soft looking with a reddish color. The meat should be firm, fine-textured, and a light cherry- red color.

Lamb

Meat from high-quality young lambs is fine-textured, firm and lean. It is pink in color and the cross sections of bones are red, moist and porous. The external fat should be firm and white and not too thick. In older lambs the meat is light red, the fat is apt to be thicker and creamy in color, and the bones may look drier, harder and less red than those of younger lambs.

Veal

Prime-quality veal should be from almost white to a very light pink. The flesh should have a firm, velvety and moist look (but not watery). The bones should be small in width and fairly soft to the touch. They should be bright red, as though full of blood. The fat covering the meat should be slight and whitish in color.

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Marbling

Marbling is the network of fat that runs through a cut of meat. Some people refer to marbling as "graining." The best marbling is distributed through the meat with the fineness of a cobweb. The marble acts as a lubricant, dissolving into the meat as it is cooked. The silky, tiny threads in the best Prime meat dissolve evenly and produce juicy, tender results.

Beef

Prime meat has a delicate interlacing of fat, which assures a high degree of tenderness.

Lamb

Lamb does have a degree of marbling. This is barely perceptible in hothouse or baby lamb but becomes more obvious in older varieties.

Veal

There is some marbling in veal, but you can hardly see it, due to the whiteness of the meat. Marbling only occurs in the rib or loin sections.

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Meat to Avoid

Lobel's recommends that you avoid buying meat with any of these characteristics:

- Fat that is yellowish or gray
- Meat with absolutely no marbling
- Meat that has a deep red color
- Meat that has a two-tone coloration
- Meat with a coarse texture
- Meat with excessive moisture
- Meat that is too fresh because it has not been aged properly

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