

How to Start a Buying Club

Want to start a Go Grassfed buying club? The following guide will help you create your own.

1

Learn the Landscape

Every buying club needs a leader who knows the basics.

- Find out what's available in your area. Use the Amazing Grazing directory to find the farms near you. Reach out to the farmers to see if their offerings fit with your needs and expectations. Some may sell whole and half animals regularly, and fit right into your buying club model. (View the Amazing Grazing directory at www.futureharvestcasa.org.)
- Learn what types of animals are available wholesale. Do you want lamb and pork, or prefer beef? Can you find one farm with all the meats you're interested in, or will you need to work with multiple farmers? Some farmers have different species available seasonally; others have multiple processing dates and have animals available year-round. Farmers typically sell whole, half and quarter animals.
- Learn which types of cuts are available. The types of cuts and numbers of those cuts available differ from species to species. Each animal yields only so many types of cuts, and the proportion will change depending on whether you want to purchase a whole, half, or quarter. Since a single cow yields only so many steaks, you'll have the opportunity to cook new and varied cuts of meat. If you want to make a bulk purchase, consider asking for a "variety pack," "sampler pack," or a "farmer's choice."
- Understand the "cut sheet." Farmers and butchers use cut sheets to divide up the parts of an animal into the end products. A certain percentage of a cow will always be ground beef, but the buyer (you!) might prefer a chuck roast over cubed stew meat, or as many T-bone steaks as possible. The farmer might ask your buying club to fill out the "cut sheet," might provide you with a pre-filled sheet for editing, or might already have a standard set of cuts. Learn more about cut sheets, different cuts of meat, and how to cook them here: www.futureharvestcasa.org/resources.
- Learn the freezer space requirement buying club members would need for quarters, half, or whole animals. The rule of thumb is one cubic foot of freezer space for every 35–40 pounds of packaged meat. Will one person store all of the meat, or will each participant have enough freezer space?
- Ask your farmer the price range for quarters, half, and whole animals, and be prepared to share this with potential members. Bulk meat pricing varies based on the type of animal, production practices, and from animal to animal. When selling an entire animal, farmers typically price the meat one of three ways: a standard price per whole animal; a set price per pound for the carcass/hanging weight; or a set price per pound per final product weight. You may have to calculate the approximate price per pound; ask your farmer for guidance, and visit www.futureharvestcasa.org/resources for a more detailed explanation of wholesale pricing.

2

Recruit Members

Now that you have learned the basics of bulk buying, it's time to recruit members. Consider how many members you want to engage in the buying club, then recruit from family and friends, via social media and email, and by posting on neighborhood and regional forums like nextdoor.com. Lay out the options: what types of meat are available and when; which cuts buyers can expect, and in what quantities; and a rough idea of cost and freezer storage requirements. Will you split the cuts and costs evenly? If certain members plan on purchasing a greater proportion of the animal, what process will you use to allocate the meat? Determine your process ahead of time.

3

Pick Up

With your club formed, place your order! Your farmer may deliver or you may need to pick up your bulk purchase from the farmer or the butcher. Plan to bring enough coolers to transport your meat home to your freezers. After pickup, meat should be stored in a freezer until you are ready to cook individual cuts.

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Let's Eat!

Now it's time to enjoy your delicious bounty! Grassfed meats are leaner and cook differently than grain-fed meats. Encourage all club members to purchase a meat thermometer to cook grassfed meat to perfection. Learn more about grassfed meat cooking techniques and recipes below—bon appetit!

- www.americangrassfed.org/recipes
- www.americangrassfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Tips-for-Cooking-Grassfed-Beef.pdf
- www.adenafarms.com/blogs/healthyliving/best-way-to-cook-grass-fed-beef
- www.onlygrassfed.com/cooking-tips/recipes.html

