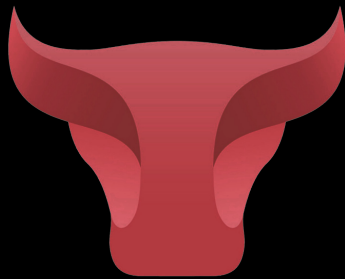


Breaking The Beef Forequarter



**BUTCHER
MAGAZINE**

Butcher Craft

Breaking The Beef Forequarter



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Introduction

Hi, My name is Dave Lang and I've been a butcher for over 40 years.

It occurred to me a while back that butchers were not being trained to butcher a full beast anymore, that people had lost touch with where their food comes from and maybe it was time that some of the old skills were introduced.

This course is aimed at trainee butchers, farmers, chefs, hunters, BBQ enthusiasts, and food business people. Really, anyone interested in preparing and handling their own food instead of purchasing a plastic tray in a supermarket.

Please be aware that the opinions of farming and feeding methods expressed in these classes are my own based on many years experience. Yours may be different. That is good, we don't all want to be the same. Your tastes and mine may not coincide. But the butchering methods covered will allow you to get the best from the meat you buy, regardless of where it came from or how it was raised.

The first thing to establish is: what are we trying to do?

We have half a cow and we need to cut it into manageable proportions for storage, cooking and of course, eating.

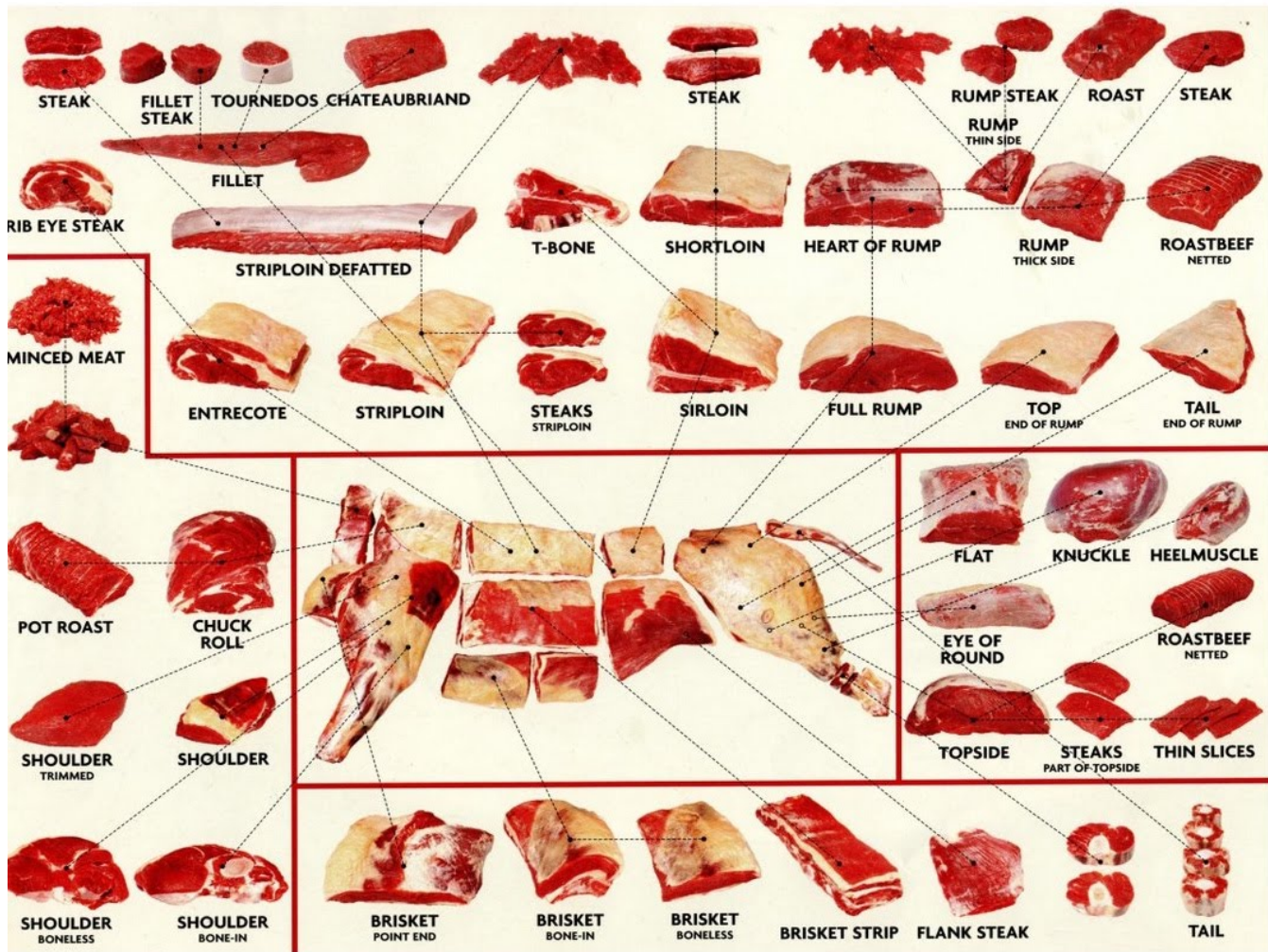
A side of beef is pretty heavy, weighing anything from 200lbs to 350lbs, so we need to break it down to manageable pieces we can use.

Another consideration is that we use the cuts as they should be used, so we don't stew fillets and fry shins.

We want to get the best out of our side of beef so we need to know which muscles can be grilled quickly and which need long, slow cooking.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

The diagram below gives a very clear indication of where on the carcass the various cuts are and what they look like.



During our classes we will show you how to take the side of beef apart, getting the best out of every cut.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Some information to help make my point:

- Approximately one third (33%) of the side of beef is waste, bone, fat, unusable trimming etc.
- Less than 2% of the carcass is Fillet Steak.
- Sirloin accounts for 4.8% and Rump will be about the same.
- There is a very large percentage of the side that will be used for ground beef or stewing meat.
- There are a few little-known cuts that are a lot more tender than you would suppose and we will point them out as we progress.

There are so many variables in beef, such as breed, age, sex, feeding, animal welfare, handling and so on and it could take a lifetime to learn it all. What we are concerned with is cutting.

I have used a fairly small, freshly killed side for the demonstration videos. The **fresh side** is a lot easier to bone out because it is softer and the **smaller side** is easier to demonstrate cutting techniques on. However, the underlying skills are applicable to any size animal, you just need to allow for the size difference.

The aim of this course is to teach you the best cuts for each type of cooking where you find them on the cow.. Each section has a video, photographs and text explaining what is being done. And if you need clarification, contact us at support@butchermagazine.com.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Remember this. No-one was born a butcher, we all had to learn from someone. Patience on the part of the student and the trainer is essential because everybody learns at a different pace. The beauty of online training is that you can look at the videos, charts and photos as often as you want. Don't worry about speed. Be more concerned with accuracy. As you get better you will become more confident. You will get faster without even noticing.

There are many fast butchers and there are many accurate butchers. Dedication and practice are the paths to achieving speed and accuracy.

We are here to help. Ask us whatever you want. Remember, the only stupid question is the one you didn't ask.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

A Word On Knives

If you have never used a butcher knife or want to know how to sharpen a knife, watch the video called Sharpening Your Knife. Using butcher knives against bone and cutting surfaces makes them blunt fairly quickly so use the steel/honing rod often. This doesn't sharpen your knife but it puts the edge back in the centre after running along bone for a while.

So let's go and learn Butcher Craft! ✓

We suggest you watch the video of each cut first and then the text and the accompanying photos and charts will make a lot more sense. We have photographs of the bones of each cut so you have knowledge of the bone's shape before you start to cut.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Breaking the Forequarter

The beef forequarter has 6 main components; the chuck, the shin, the LMC (also known as the Shoulder Clod), the brisket, the neck and the ribs.

TOOLS - Butcher knife, boning knife, bone saw.

Removing The Shin

Firstly, we'll remove the shin. Remember, in most boning tasks you will only be using the first half inch of the knife or less. Most first timers are inclined to go too deep with the knife and create deep cuts in the muscles.

This does not affect the quality of the meat but we are trying for clean, neat butchering work.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Ideally every bone would be pure white, leaving all the meat intact, but we don't live in an ideal world, so your goal will be to leave the least amount of meat on the bones as possible.

There is a complicated joint where the shin is attached to the shoulder bone. [Follow the blue line in the photo](#) to make your initial cut. Where the light coloured area is there is a thin layer of gristle (under my two fingers in the video).

Make your mark with the knife and then scoop off the light coloured area. Cut under the shin to the same line as the one on top to loosen the joint. Clear the meat from the elbow with the knife on its side and open up the joint as much as possible. As you are clearing around the joint it will become looser and the point of your knife will travel a little deeper. When you think the joint has been cleared sufficiently, hit the shin hard with your hand and if it has been cleared enough the joint will open. This is a bit hit and miss as every animal is different, but it becomes easier with practice. Remove the shin by cutting through the remaining meat.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter



follow blue line to open shin joint
open under the shin also

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Removing the Brisket

The brisket is a dense muscle on the animal's breastbone (sternum) and is a broad, flat muscle that becomes thinner as it gets towards the animal's middle.

Make the cut with the butcher's knife at the mark in the diagram. Cut all the way down to where you previously removed the shin. Make the rest of your cut under the projecting LMC muscle and follow the straight line of the brisket. Saw along the cut you have made to separate the brisket from the forequarter.



cutting line for brisket

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Separate the Ribs from the Chuck

Count 4, or 5 ribs, depending on whether you prefer a bigger chuck or bigger ribs, and make a cut running alongside the rib. Your knife will meet the blade bone and here you will use the saw.

Saw through the blade bone keeping the saw flat and when you are through the bone resume cutting with the knife until you reach the backbone. While you are sawing the bone, listen, and when you hear the sound change you will know you are through the bone. Use the saw to go through the backbone and you have separated the chuck from the ribs.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Remove the LMC/Shoulder Clod

There is a joint on the chuck where the shoulder bone meets the blade bone (scapula) seen here towards the lower end of the blue line and marked with an X. Feel for the joint with your fingers and start your cut with the bigger knife at the top of the line and cut through to the ribs and work your way down. At the joint, clear away the gristle around the joint with the boning knife and find where the joint is. Separate the two bones (a ball and socket joint) and cut down towards the ribs. Finish the cut with the bigger knife until you have a clean line all the way down the ribs. Saw through the ribs to separate the LMC from the chuck.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Boning the Shin

You will see on the underside of the shin that the muscle doesn't cover the bone all the way around. That is where to begin. Using only the top half inch of the knife open the muscle on one side of the bone all the way down. Do the same with the muscle on the other side of the bone until you have cleared as much as you can on that side. Now work your way around the bone clearing the meat as cleanly as possible.



Butchery 1



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

When you come to the elbow (the lower left of the photos above), flatten your knife against the bone to get as clean a cut as possible.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

The shin is a muscle with a lot of connective tissue (because it is one of the main “working” muscles) and is best cooked slowly in a liquid. This cooking method pays off because the flavour after 4 hours simmering is unbeatable and it becomes very tender when the connective tissue has been broken down.

Boning the Brisket

Start boning at the thin end of the brisket and run the knife almost flat along the bones. Keep moving down the ribs towards the breastbone and you will reach a layer of fat. Follow the contour of the bone all the way until you have cleared the brisket completely.

After you have removed the bone cut between the rib ends to retrieve any usable meat.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

The brisket muscle is best suited to long slow cooking or long smoking. It has a great beef flavour that the longer cooking will highlight.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Brisket bones untrimmed



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Brisket bones trimmed



Brisket boneless

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Boning the LMC

The LMC is a big primal that contains several useful muscles. It is quite lean and has many uses. Parts of it can be roasted, some can be fried and there is a lot of lean meat for dicing (stews, casseroles, burgers, meatloaf). To get the best tenderness and flavour from these muscles, the beef should be at least 14 days since slaughter, or more if possible.

As in the video, start by opening up the meat to see the bone, then working your way around the bone to separate it from the muscle. Using the tip of the knife, again no deep cuts, work around the bone and clear the knobs of bone on each end, There is some heavy connective tissue that you will slice through to clear the bone.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Boning the Chuck

There are bones in the chuck with quite awkward shapes. But the easiest way to perform clean removal is to get familiar with the shapes.

See the video [Beef Neck Bones Arrangement](#) to see the bone shapes.

The first bones we will tackle are the vertebrae, connected to the rib ends in the chuck, they have curvy tricky joints. See the video for where to begin. It will become clearer as you work your way along the backbone removing all vertebrae.

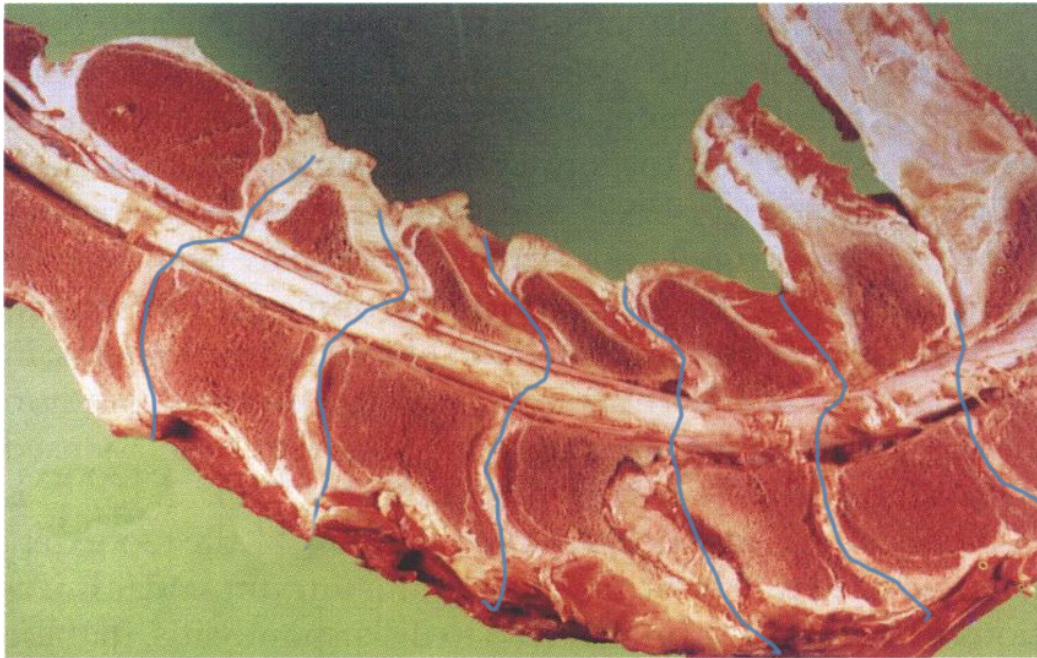
Put your knife into the gaps between the vertebrae and work your way down. The best way to describe the initial entry cuts is an “S” shape still using just the top of the knife. After you clear the “S” run the knife along the ribs to clear all meat from them. Take your time on this, it’s not the easiest set of bones but it’s worth learning.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter



Bones from the chuck and neck

Breaking The Beef Forequarter



The cutting lines on the neck bones. You can remove the bones together as one piece, but is is wasteful and if you are learning to be a butcher, you need to do every task on the side of beef.

Taking the neck bones out as one piece will be quicker and requires less skill, but can leave a lot of usable meat on the bone.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

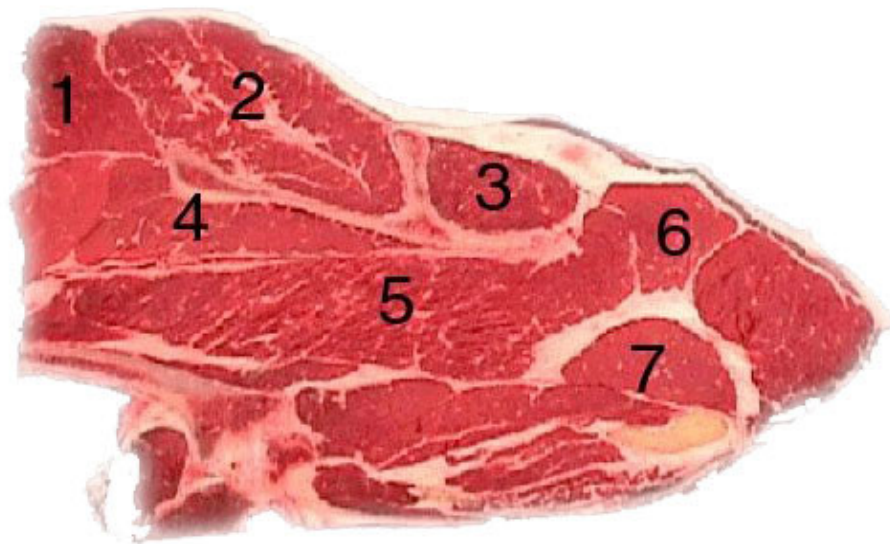
Removing the Blade Bone from the Chuck

The blade is flat on one side and is flat with a ridge in the middle of the other side. A cross-section of the blade can be seen in the photo above with the numbers 2 and 3 above it.

Keeping the knife almost flat run it along the flat (under) side of the bone.

When you have cleared out to the edges start to bone around the contour of the bone.

Keeping the knife as flat as you can until you reach the ridge. Scoop the knife around the ridge (see video) and clear the blade bone as cleanly as possible.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter



There are some really nice muscles in the chuck (the Feather Blades and the Flat Iron).

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Research in the USA has stated that those muscles are only second to the Fillet (Tenderloin) in tenderness. If the beef has been hanging long enough (3 weeks if possible) then we agree. Also, they have a much better flavour than the Fillet. You don't see them often for sale because there is a degree of skill involved in butchering them properly.



Below you can see the feather blade membrane being removed and then the feather blade completely trimmed.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter



Breaking The Beef Forequarter

Preparing the Ribs

The set of ribs is the only *real* premium cut on the forequarter. In our opinion, it is the best cut of meat on the whole side. The ribs contain the Ribeye steaks and roasts. The Cowboy steaks and the Tomahawk steaks are the same cut with either long or short bones. The best piece of meat in the whole side is the Prime Rib Roast.



Breaking The Beef Forequarter



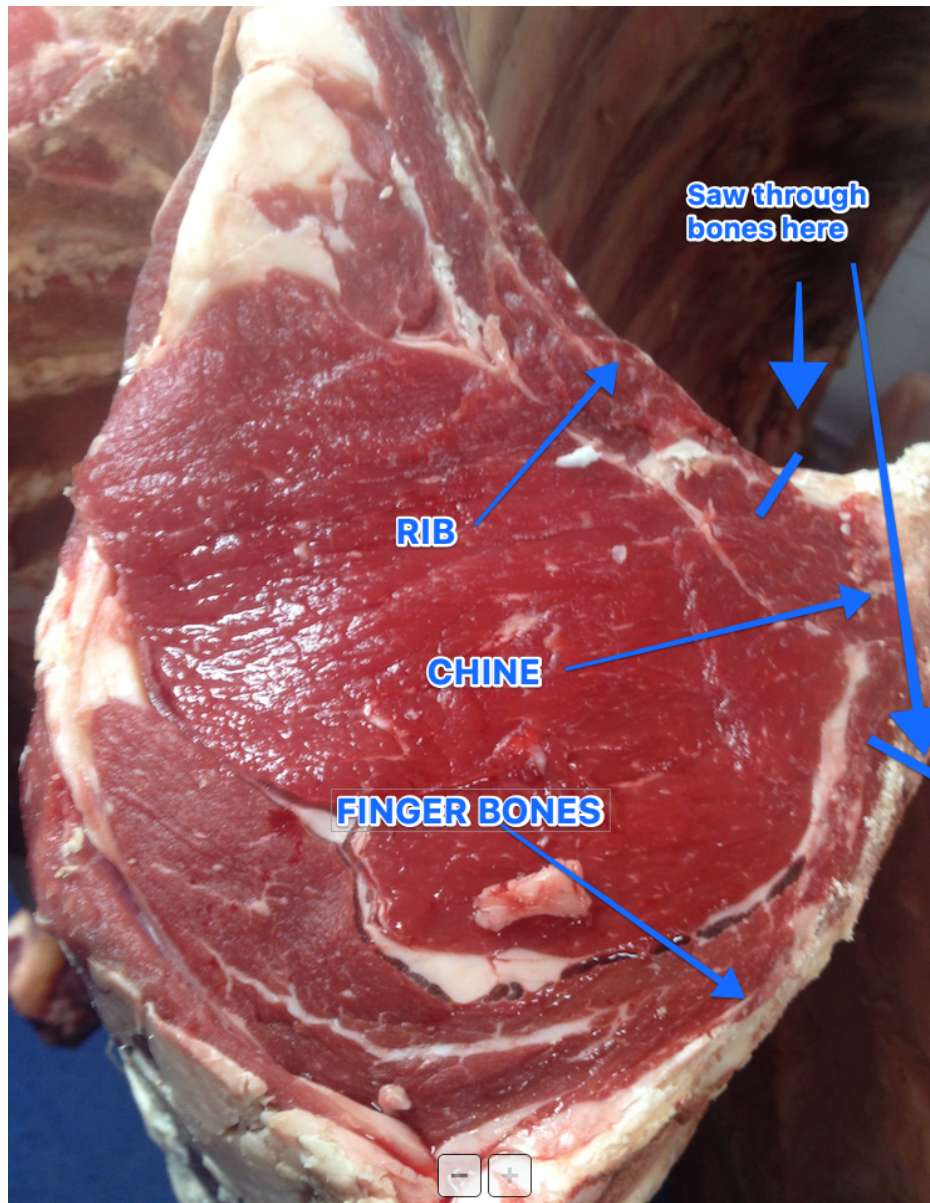
Breaking The Beef Forequarter



The chine is the name given to the triangular tip of the vertebrae. Removing the chine makes boning the set of ribs much easier and if you are roasting a prime rib, having the chine taken out makes it so much easier to carve.

Using the bone saw cut along the feather bones just below the chine then cut the ends of the ribs nearest the chine. In the diagram below you will see the chine, the rib and the feather bone. The **blue marks** indicate where to saw to remove the chine. See the video for more detail

Breaking The Beef Forequarter



You can also prepare the rib with the bones removed and the cap off (cube roll), or boneless with the longer tail and rolled into a Rolled Rib Roast.

Breaking The Beef Forequarter

The Rolled Rib roast has gone out of fashion since the bone-in Prime Rib became popular but is still available. The tail of the rib is left longer and the bones are all removed. Some internal fat is removed, but not all of it. Any of the intercostal muscles will be taken off and then the whole piece is rolled as you see below.



© Butcher Craft 2019 | © Butcher Magazine 2019



**BUTCHER
MAGAZINE**