

Specifications for Evaluating Center-cut Ham Slices

Description:

Bone-in, center-cut ham slices are removed from the center section of bone-in hams. The cured and smoked center ham slice should be free of skin, bruises, blood clots, and lymph glands. Ham slices should be approximately round and exhibit a cured and smoked appearance. The lean meat should possess a fine, smooth texture with a uniform and bright, reddish-pink color (a slightly two-toned or iridescent color is permissible). Excessive under-trimming or over-trimming of the ham slice for any reason is not desirable.

Evaluation:

Bone-in, center-cut ham slices should be evaluated by the following criteria:

1. **Cutability:** Ham slices with a great area of exposed lean, little external/internal fat, and a small amount of bone are desirable. For a smoked, cured ham, the center slice should display acceptable muscling as evaluated by the depth and width of the cushion and forecushion areas. Subcutaneous fat and intermuscular fat ("fat pockets") should not be excessive. No more than 1/8 in. of subcutaneous fat should be present. The size of the bone should be included in the evaluation, as a larger bone is less desirable.
2. **Color:** A uniform dark, reddish-pink cured color should be observed on all muscle surfaces. This cured color should be uniform throughout the entire ham slice with as little color variation between muscles as possible.
3. **Physical defects:** "Blood splashing" (specks or spots of blood), uncured spots, "two-toning," or "greening" should not be present on the exposed cut surface. The texture of the exposed cut surface should be smooth and fine. Coarse texture may be the result of using meat of carcasses from mature animals or from inadequate cooking. The cut surface should be firm and non-exudative with no separation of muscle groups. The pickle pocket should be as small as possible with the least amount of sinewy appearance.