

Intercollegiate & National FFA Meats Contest

Processed Meat Class

Judging Guidelines

Version: December 17, 2015

Specifications for Evaluating Slice Bacon

Description:

The term “bacon” is used to describe the cured belly of a swine carcass. Sliced bacon describes slices of cured pork belly that are normally found in 12 oz or larger vacuum packages in retail stores. The product entry should be judged as an entire package and the bacon slices should be uniform in length and shape. Firm, dry (but not overly dry) slices are desirable, while wet, oily slices are not desirable. The presence of purge or exudate (water in the package or excess on the product’s surface) suggests that the bacon slices were generated from a lower quality belly.

Evaluation:

Sliced bacon should be evaluated by the following criteria:

1. Fat-to-lean ratio: The ideal fat-to-lean ratio of sliced bacon is approximately 50-55% lean and 45-50% fat. This is determined by averaging the fat vs. lean of several slices.
2. Lean and fat color: The color of the lean portion of the bacon slices should be a desirable reddish-pink, cured color. The color should also be uniform among all muscles within each bacon slice, as well as among all of the bacon slices. A bright white fat is also desirable.
3. Physical defects: Any signs of visual oiliness/greasiness should downgrade the bacon slices exhibit. Also, lean/fat separation, tiger-stripping (light colored vertical stripes observed perpendicular to the direction of the lean and fat), and shattering/cracking of fat is also considered a defect. Finally, bacon slices should be uniform in confirmation. Rectangular shaped slices devoid of “v” or valley shaped regions are non-desirable.