

Excerpts from the OE entries for *beef*, *mutton*, *pork*, and *veal*, giving the principal meanings of each and their earliest attestations.

Don Ringe, December 2006

beef

1. The flesh of an ox, bull, or cow, used as food.

a 1300 *K. Alis.* 5248 To mete was greithed beef and motoun. *c* 1350 *Will. Palerne* 1849 Fair bouf wel sode. *c* 1386 CHAUCER *Merch. Tale* 176 Bet than olde boef is tendre vel. *c* 1420 *Liber Cocorum* (1862) 27 Fresshe brothe of the befe.

3. An ox; any animal of the ox kind; *esp.* a fattened beast, or its carcass.

c 1320 *Seuyn Sag.* (W.) Hit mote both drink and ete ... Beues flesch, and drink the broht. 1475 *Bk. Noblesse* 68 Grete providence of vitaille of cornys, of larde, and beoffes.

[... 1861 The supply of beeves and grain for his household. 1884 All the beefs that are ready for shipping.]

mutton

1. The flesh of sheep, used as food.

c 1290 *S. Eng. Leg.* I 472/344 Huy nomen with heom in heore schip al þat hem was leof, Gies and hennes, craunes and swannes and porc, motoun, and beof. *c* 1375 *Sc. Leg. Saints* xxv. (*Julian*) 114 Sancte Julyane ... In til his tyme wes na glotone, na wont wes nocht to ete motone. *c* 1420 *Liber Cocorum* (1862) 46 Take fresshe brothe of motene clene.

2. A sheep; *esp.* one intended to be eaten.

1338 R. BRUNNE *Chron.* (1810) 174 A bouke of a motoun. 1390 GOWER *Conf.* I 39 The Wolf in pes with the Moltoun.

pork

†1. A swine, a hog, a pig.

?*a* 1400 *Morte Arth.* 3122 Pouerall and pastorelles passede on aftyre, With porkes to pasture at the price zates. *c* 1400 *Destr. Troy* 3837 Polidarius was pluccid as a porke fat.

[Last non-dialect prose citation is 1682.]

2. The flesh of swine used as food; *spec.* the fresh flesh.

c 1290 *S. Eng. Leg.* I 472/344 Huy nomen with heom in heore schip ... porc, motoun, and beof. 1398 *TREVISA Barth. de P. R.* XVIII.vii. (Bodl. MS) lf. 246 b/1 Boores flesche is more hard and drye ... þan tame porke.

veal

1. The flesh of a calf as an article of diet.

c 1386 *CHAUCER Merch. Tale* 176 ‘Bet is,’ quod he, ‘a pyk than a pikerell, And bet than olde boef is the tendre vel.’ *c* 1400 *MAUNDEV.* (1839) vi. 72 Thei eten but lytille or non of Flessche of Veel or of Beef. *c* 1420 *Liber Cocorum* (1862) 28 A sawce hit is For vele and venyson, iwys.

2. A calf, esp. as killed for food or intended for this purpose.

1422 *YONGE tr. Secreta Secret.* 244 Flesh of Velis, Vynegre, hemroll, and Potage of oot-mell. *c* 1450 *Mirour Saluacioun* (Roxb.) 71 The ydolaters of the golden veel.