Where meat hides on food labels

Keeping meatless days in Lent? Meat and ingredients made from meat turn up in foods that do not look meaty. Here is what to look for, and what common practice says about each group.

This is meat, even when the food does not look meaty

Pieces of meat in a food count as meat. Check the ingredients of:

- **Canned and boxed soups**
  chicken noodle, split pea with ham, bean with bacon
- **Baked beans**
  often cooked with pork or bacon
- **Frozen pizza and pockets**
  pepperoni, sausage, ham
- **Dumplings and potstickers**
  pork or chicken fillings, even in mixed packs
- **Salad kits and toppings**
  real bacon bits, chicken
- **Stuffing, rice and pasta mixes**
  sausage, chicken, beef pieces

Made from meat: broth, stock and fat

No pieces of meat, but made from it. The USCCB says these are technically not forbidden. Many families skip them anyway.

- **Chicken or beef broth, stock**
  soups, rice mixes, sauces, ramen
- **Bouillon, meat extract**
  cubes, powders, seasoning packets
- **Gravy and gravy mixes**
  most are made with meat stock or drippings
- **Lard**
  refried beans, tortillas, tamales, pie crust
- **Beef tallow, suet**
  some fries, frying oil, pastry
- **Natural flavors, chicken flavor**
  can be meat based; the label rarely says

Allowed in common practice, but not vegetarian

Fine on a Lenten Friday for most Catholics. Worth knowing if you keep a vegetarian or stricter fast.

- **Anchovies**
  Worcestershire sauce, Caesar dressing
- **Fish sauce, shrimp paste**
  Thai and Vietnamese sauces
- **Gelatin**
  gummies, marshmallows; often pork

What common practice asks

No meat	On Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and every Friday of Lent, for Catholics aged 14 and older.
Fasting	On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, for ages 18 to 59: one full meal and two smaller meals that together are less than a full meal.
Fish is allowed	Fish and shellfish are not counted as meat. Eggs and dairy are allowed too.
Excused	People who are ill, pregnant or nursing are excused. Common sense comes first.

This is common US Catholic practice. Your diocese, tradition or church may differ; Orthodox and other churches keep different fasts. Ask your priest or pastor.

Let the app read the label

PlatePal's pescatarian profile flags meat ingredients on the label, including broth, stock, lard, tallow and gelatin, and lets fish through. It reads the label for meat; it does not decide what your church asks.

Keeping a stricter fast? The vegetarian profile flags fish too, and the vegan profile also flags eggs and dairy.

Set PlatePal to pescatarian, and one barcode scan flags meat, broth, lard and gelatin for you.
Scan the code with your phone camera, or visit tryplatepal.com

PlatePal printable. A shopping aid, not a religious ruling: churches and traditions differ. Always read the label. Free to print and copy for personal and parish use.