

Butcher

Break down carcasses and cut meat for grocery stores and butcher shops. Learn on the job, unionized at big chains, and Canada is short of you.

TYPICAL PAY

\$42,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$32k to \$58k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Grocery stores, butcher shops,
meat plants, restaurants**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grade 12
Grade 12 is usually asked for. A part-time job in a grocery meat department is the best head start. Grade 12
- 2 Meat counter or cutting-room helper** 6 to 12 months
Wrapping, stocking, cleaning, grinding. Then simple cuts under supervision.
- 3 Apprenticeship or college certificate (optional)** 1 to 2 years
Ontario has a voluntary Retail Meat Cutter apprenticeship (trade code 245R). Saskatchewan has a voluntary Meat Cutter trade. BC certifies meat cutters through SkilledTradesBC. Some colleges run short meat-processing programs.
- 4 Full cutter** 2 to 3 years
Breaking primals into retail cuts, boning, trimming, portioning, pricing, ordering. Several years to get fast and waste little.
- 5 Department manager or your own shop** 5 years and up
Running the counter, ordering and staff, or opening a specialty butcher shop.

Pros and cons

- + Paid from day one, no debt
- + Steady work in every town
- + Union pension and benefits at big chains
- Cold, wet, early mornings
- Knives and saws: cuts happen
- Heavy lifting and standing all day

Good to know

Canada needs butchers

Job Bank projects a moderate risk of shortage for retail butchers through 2033. About 14,400 people work as retail butchers, and the median retirement age is 65, so retirements are opening jobs.

It is a trade in Ontario, with no exam

Ontario's Retail Meat Cutter apprenticeship (code 245R) is voluntary. Because there is no certifying exam, Skilled Trades Ontario issues a Certificate of Apprenticeship rather than a Certificate of Qualification.

Optional boosts

Whole-animal butchery. Sausage and charcuterie. Dry aging and custom cuts. Department management.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Butcher, retail, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Job Bank: Butcher, retail, job prospects

Job Bank: Butcher, retail, employment requirements

Skilled Trades Ontario: Retail Meat Cutter

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/butcher>



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