

Butchers

SOC: 51-3021 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$38,960

Median Salary

143,100

Employment

+1.0%

Growth Rate

■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: No formal educational credential

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Medium Risk - 38.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.

This job has some routine elements but still requires human judgment and interaction.

■■ Work-Life Balance

4.9/10 - Fair work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	8.4/10	Investigative	5.0/10
Artistic	3.8/10	Social	4.6/10
Enterprising	4.0/10	Conventional	8.0/10

■ Top Skills Required

Customer-service skills, Dexterity, Physical stamina, Physical strength

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Butchers are skilled food production professionals who prepare, cut, and process **meat and poultry products for retail, wholesale, or food service use**. Their work ensures meat is safely handled, accurately portioned, and attractively presented for consumers. Butchers combine technical knife skills with food safety knowledge and customer service, playing a key role in the food supply chain. This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy hands-on work, precision tasks, and working in food production or retail environments.

What Do Butchers Do?

Butchers process whole or partial animal carcasses into usable cuts of meat while following strict safety and sanitation standards.

Common responsibilities include:

- Cutting, trimming, and boning meat and poultry
- Using knives, saws, grinders, and other meat-processing tools
- Weighing, packaging, and labeling meat products
- Preparing custom cuts based on customer or business needs
- Inspecting meat for quality, freshness, and defects
- Maintaining clean, sanitary work areas and equipment
- Following food safety, hygiene, and temperature-control procedures

Types of Butchery Work

Butchers may specialize based on setting or production scale:

- Retail Butchers: Work in grocery stores or butcher shops serving customers directly.
- Wholesale or Processing Plant Butchers: Perform high-volume meat processing.
- Meat Cutters: Focus on portioning and preparing standardized cuts.
- Custom or Artisan Butchers: Prepare specialty cuts, dry-aged meats, or handcrafted products.
- Slaughterhouse Workers (related roles): Handle initial processing stages.

Skills and Abilities Needed

Butchers combine physical skill, precision, and food safety awareness.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Training Pathway

Most butchers learn through hands-on training and experience:

- High School Diploma or Equivalent: Typical minimum requirement
- On-the-Job Training: Learning cutting techniques and safety standards
- Apprenticeships or Trade Training (optional): Structured butchery instruction
- Food Safety Certification: Often required by employers or regulators
- Continued Skill Development: Learning advanced or specialty cuts

Where Do Butchers Work?

Butchers work across the meat production and food service industry:

- Grocery Stores and Supermarkets
- Independent Butcher Shops
- Meat Processing and Packing Plants
- Restaurants and Food Service Operations

- Wholesale Food Distributors

Work environments often involve cold storage areas and early or shift-based schedules.

How Much Do Butchers Earn?

Earnings vary by experience, specialization, and employer:

- Entry-Level Butchers or Meat Cutters: Typically earn hourly wages
- Experienced or Specialized Butchers: Often earn higher pay
- Lead Butchers or Shop Managers: May earn more with responsibility

Compensation may include overtime, union wages, or benefits.

Is This Career Difficult?

Butchery is physically demanding and safety-critical. Workers must perform repetitive cutting motions, lift heavy items, and maintain focus to avoid injury while meeting productivity and quality standards. The challenge lies in balancing speed, precision, and safety in fast-paced environments.

Who Should Consider Becoming a Butcher?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy hands-on, skilled work
- Are comfortable using knives and tools
- Prefer structured, task-focused environments
- Can handle physical labor and cold conditions
- Want a practical trade with steady demand

How to Prepare Early

- Learn basic food safety and hygiene practices
- Develop knife-handling and precision skills
- Build physical strength and stamina
- Gain experience through grocery or food service work
- Explore butcher apprenticeships or trade programs

Butchers transform raw cuts into safe, high-quality food products through precision, skill, and care—playing a vital role in feeding communities and maintaining trust in the food supply.