

Butchers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia



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Retail and Wholesale Butchers [NOC 63201] & Industrial Butchers and Meat Cutters [NOC 94141]

Butchers may also be called:

- Meat Cutter
- Industrial Meat Cutter
- Meat Trimmer
- Sausage Maker
- Meat Boner

1. What Would I Do?

There are three main types of butchers:

- The first type of butcher works for wholesalers and supermarket chains. You cut large pieces of meat into steaks and chops, shape and tie roasts, and grind beef for sale as chopped meat. You may also package, price and attractively display meat items.
- The second type of butcher works in meat shops or markets and has direct contact with customers. You help customers choose meats and prepare special requests. You also weigh the meat, price it, and prepare specialty cuts.

- The third type of butcher works in meatpacking plants, where you slaughter large animals such as cattle and pigs, and cut the large segments of meat into smaller portions. You may work on an assembly line, and be responsible for a particular cut of meat. This type of work involves little contact with the public.

All types of butchers are responsible for ensuring meat quality, and maintaining approved sanitation and safety programs.

Your duties as a **retail or wholesale butcher** may include:

- Cut, trim and prepare standard cuts of meat, poultry, fish and shellfish according to customer orders
- Grind meats and slice cooked meats using power grinders and slicing machines
- Prepare displays of meat, poultry, fish and shellfish
- Shape, lace and tie roasts and other meats, poultry or fish

Your duties as an **industrial butcher** may include:

- Skin, clean and trim carcasses and remove bones from meat
- Split carcasses into smaller portions for handling
- Cut meat and poultry into specific cuts for institutional, commercial or wholesale use
- Slaughter livestock using stunning devices and knives
- May slaughter cattle, calves and sheep as set out by religious laws

More Information:

- **WorkBC | Retail and Wholesale Butchers**
<https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/butchers-retail-and-wholesale>
- **WorkBC | Industrial Butchers and Meat Cutters**
<https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/industrial-butchers-and-meat-cutters-poultry-preparers-and-related-workers>
- **Career Cruising | Butcher**
Available from the VPL Digital Library <https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/career-cruising>

2. Am I Suited For This Job?

Butchers must:

- Keep work areas clean and sanitary
- Follow safety procedures
- Be able to work with machinery in a challenging environment
- Have familiarity with food handling, food safety, food preparation and presentation
- Have good vision and hand-eye coordination
- Physical strength and stamina
- Have excellent personal hygiene

As a butcher you'll be on your feet for most of the workday. You require physical strength for lifting heavy pieces of meat, so general good health is essential. Good hand-eye coordination is also important as you will work with sharp instruments such as knives and saws in addition to other meat cutting machines.

You may work behind the scenes in a refrigerated room preparing cuts of meat for display, or behind a retail counter sharing your expert knowledge and filling orders.

Butchers who work in smaller stores have more varied work and more contact with the public than those in large wholesale firms, so good customer service is important.

It's a good career choice for someone who likes a fast-paced environment, working with the public and as part of a team.

More Information:

- **Meatforce.ca** | Canadian Professional Meat Cutters Association (CPMCA)
<https://meatforce.ca> and <https://meatforce.ca/careers/retail-meat-cutter>

Sources: WorkBC & Career Cruising

3. What Are The Wages And Benefits?

In British Columbia, the median annual salary for **retail or wholesale butchers** is \$47,969, with hourly wages ranging from \$17.40 to \$24.50.

In BC regions you can expect to make:

Community/Area	Low (\$/hour)	Median (\$/hour)	High (\$/hour)
British Columbia	17.40	23.00	24.50
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	17.40	23.00	24.50
Vancouver Island and Coast Region	17.40	23.00	24.50

Source: Job Bank <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/6263/BC>

The median annual salary for **industrial butchers and meat cutters** is somewhat less at \$42,755, with hourly wages ranging from \$17.40 to \$24. You can expect to make:

Community/Area	Low (\$/hour)	Median (\$/hour)	High (\$/hour)
British Columbia	17.40	20.50	24.00
Lower Mainland–Southwest Region	17.40	20.10	23.80
Thompson–Okanagan Region	17.40	19.50	27.50

Source: Job Bank <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/11962/BC>

Your exact wage will depend on your experience, skill level, what type of butcher you are, and which region of BC you live in.

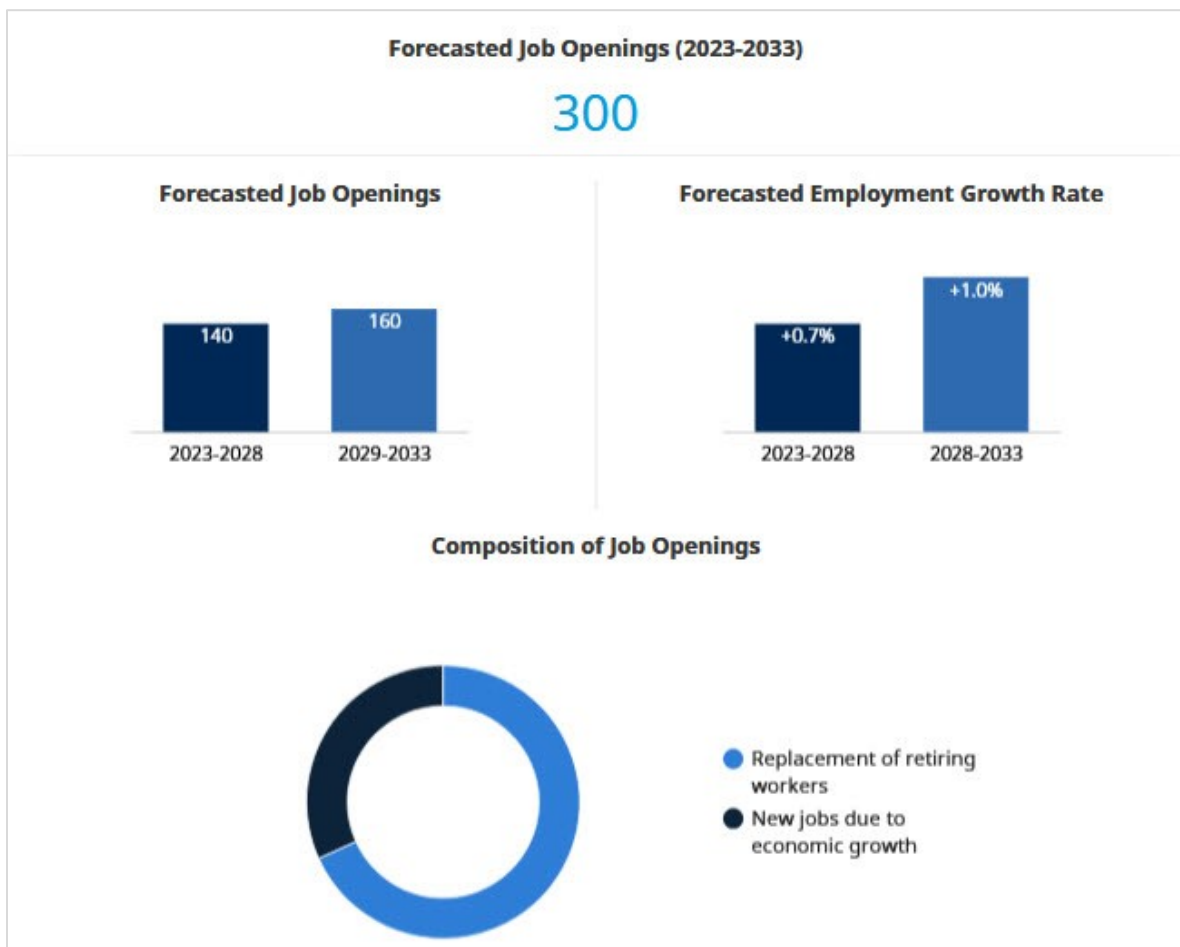
Many butchers receive benefits along with their pay such as vacation time, paid sick leave, and dental coverage. Butchers who work at grocery stores or plants are often in a union. These workers have their wage rates and benefits negotiated for them by union representatives.

4. What Is The Job Outlook In BC?

The employment outlook is expected to be limited for both **retail/wholesale** and **industrial butchers** for the 2023-2025 period.

Occupations in retail and wholesale trade continue to be in some demand due to high turnover rates and recruitment challenges. Overall employment however will be tied to consumer spending levels and the general health of the economy. Decreased consumer spending will be reflected in a lower demand for these jobs.

WorkBC forecasts 300 new jobs for **retail and wholesale butchers** between 2023 and 2033. The majority of job openings are expected to be found in the Lower Mainland (+210), followed by the Vancouver Island/Coast (+50) and Thompson-Okanagan (+20) regions.



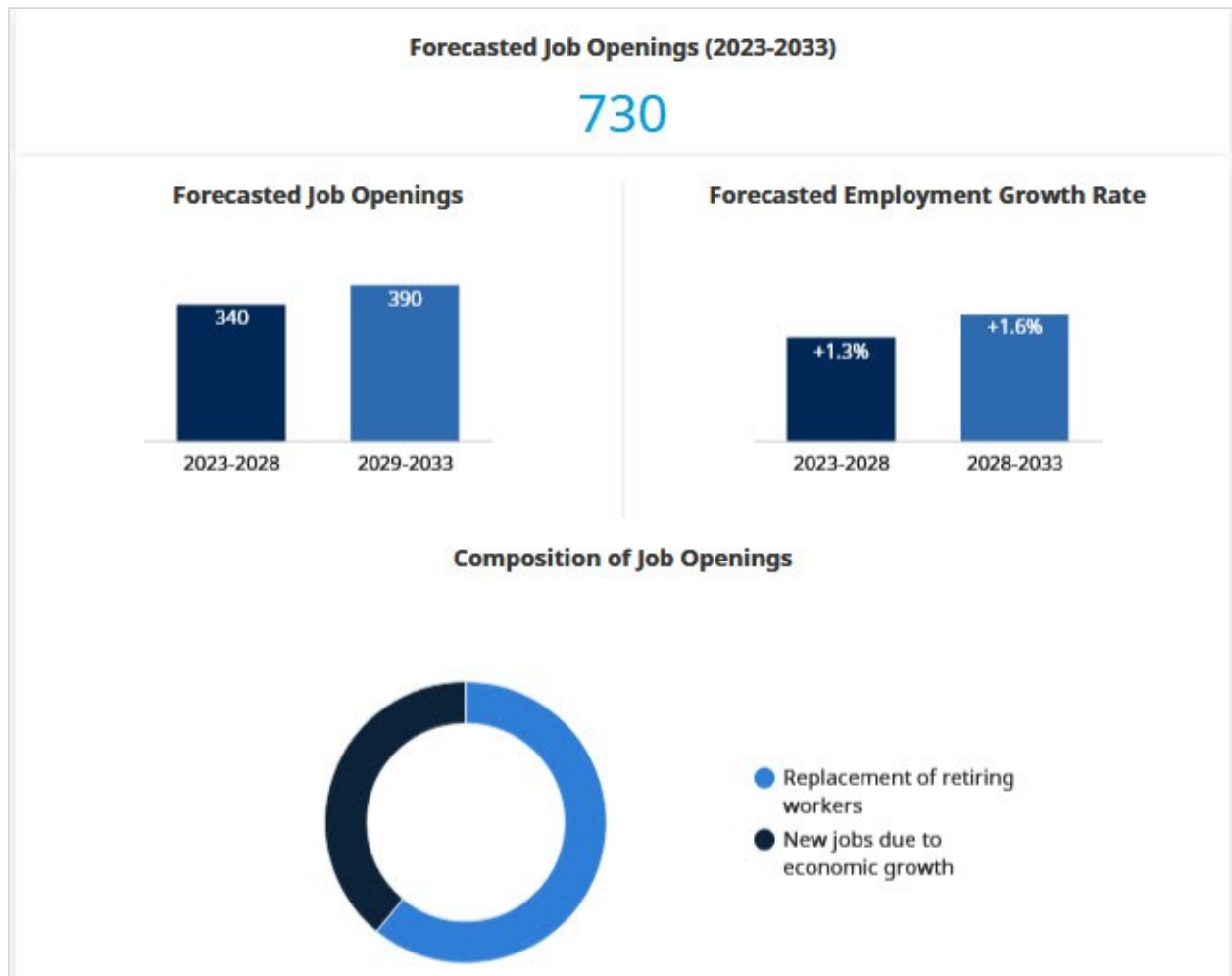
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Sources:

- Job Bank <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/6263/BC>
- WorkBC <https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/butchers-retail-and-wholesale>

WorkBC forecasts 730 new jobs for **industrial butchers and meat cutters** between 2023 and 2033. The majority of job openings are expected to be found in the Lower Mainland (+570), followed by the Thompson-Okanagan (+110) and Vancouver Island/Coast (+20) regions.



Sources:

- Job Bank <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/marketreport/wages-occupation/11962/BC>
- WorkBC <https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/industrial-butchers-and-meat-cutters-poultry-preparers-and-related-workers>

5. How Do I Become a Butcher?

Butchers usually require:

- High school diploma
- Valid BC FoodSafe certification

You may also be expected to have:

- Post-secondary program or apprenticeship in meat cutting
- Prior experience or on-the-job training

You can often get an entry-level job as a butcher without any prior experience or education if the employer is willing to provide you with on-the-job training. However, many employers do prefer to hire applicants with some prior education in meat cutting. Another way to enter the trade is through a 1- to 3-year apprenticeship.

In British Columbia, trade certification for butchers is available but not mandatory.

More Information:

- **Skilled Trades BC | Meatcutter**
<https://skilledtradesbc.ca/meatcutter>
- **Skilled Trades BC | Newcomers and International Tradespersons**
<https://skilledtradesbc.ca/get-certified/newcomers-international-tradespersons>
- **Canadian Professional Meat Cutters Association (CPMCA) | Education**
<https://meatforce.ca/education>
- **Trades Training BC | Meatcutter**
<https://www.tradestrainingbc.ca/Trades/Culinary/Meatcutter/Apprenticeship-Schedules>

Sources: WorkBC & Career Cruising

6. How Do I Find a Job?

Butchers work in a variety of settings including:

- Retail supermarkets & grocery stores
- Butcher shops
- Meat wholesalers
- Meat processing and packing plants

Finding Advertised Jobs

Jobs are advertised in a variety of sources including newspapers, magazines and online job sites.

Local Newspapers

You can look at the *Vancouver Sun* & *The Province* at Vancouver Public Library for free. Check the job postings daily, the careers section in the *Vancouver Sun* on Wednesdays and Saturdays and, in *The Province* on Sundays.

Online Job Postings

- **CPMCA | Job Postings**
<https://meatforce.ca/careers/job-postings>
- **Indeed.com**
https://ca.indeed.com/advanced_search
- **Go2HR Jobs**
<https://www.go2hr.ca/jobs>
- **WorkBC**
<https://www.workbc.ca/search-and-prepare-job/find-jobs#/job-search>
- **BC JobConnect**
<https://www.bcjobconnect.ca> ****must have permanent resident number****
Newcomers can post their skills, education and work experience to BC employers looking for workers.

Finding "Hidden Jobs"

Many job vacancies are not advertised. The resources below help you with finding jobs in this hidden job market.

Using Directories to Create a List of Potential Employers

You can use directories to produce lists of companies that are more likely to employ butchers. Contact them directly to find out if they're hiring.

- **BCMeats | Find Processors**
<https://bcmeats.ca/places/category/processors>
- **Go2HR | Company Directory**
<https://www.go2hr.ca/companies> [search for "butcher"]

- **Reference Canada**

Available from VPL Digital Library <https://www.vpl.ca/digital-library/reference-canada>

Click on "Start Search" beside Canadian Businesses, then select the "Advanced Search" button. Select both "Keyword/SIC/NAICS" under Business Type and "City" under Geography. In the top search box enter "butcher" or "meat" or "grocery" and click SEARCH. Select the appropriate headings. Lower down, select the Province, choose the cities, and click the "View Results" button.

NOTE: *You can access this database from a Library computer. If you are using a computer from outside the Library, you will need a Vancouver Public Library card to login to this database. After clicking on the database name, you will be asked to enter your library card number and PIN (usually last four digits of your telephone number).*

Volunteering and Temporary Agencies

Many positions are filled by people who have been recommended by someone they know. Networking, working as a volunteer or registering with a temporary employment agency are good ways of helping you find jobs and meet people in your industry.

Networking and the Hidden Job Market

When looking for work, be sure to talk to friends, relatives and neighbours. They may know someone who is hiring! Working as a volunteer, attending events, and joining clubs and associations are good ways to gain "Canadian experience." They are also good ways to meet people to learn about the local job market.

Volunteer Opportunities

- **Volunteer BC**

<https://volunteerbc.bc.ca>

- **GoVolunteer.ca**

<https://govolunteer.ca>

More Information:

- **Networking for Employment**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/networking-for-employment>

- **Getting Canadian Work Experience**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/getting-canadian-work-experience>

7. Applying for a Job

In Canada, employers usually expect to receive a resume and a cover letter that identifies the position you are applying for and summarizes your experience.

Use the library catalogue <https://vpl.bibliocommons.com> to find books on writing resumes and cover letters specific to your industry.

More Information:

- **Writing Resumes and Cover Letters**

<https://www.vpl.ca/siic/guide/job-search-resources/writing-resumes-and-cover-letters>

8. Where Can This Job Lead?

People entering this occupation usually find employment in entry-level positions (i.e., clean-up or delivery person) in a large organization. If you are reliable and good with customers, you may be considered for an apprenticeship.

Qualified butchers and meat cutters who have experience may progress to supervisory positions in large organizations, including department managers, in-store supervisors, operations managers or company managers. It is also possible to do specialty consulting, become the owner-operator of a smaller store or custom meat operation, or work as a meat inspector in the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Industrial meat cutters may progress to inspecting, testing and grading jobs.

9. Where Can I Find More Information?

- **Canadian Professional Meat Cutters Association (CPMCA)**
<https://meatforce.ca>
- **BCMeats**
<https://bcmeats.ca>
- **Skilled Trades BC**
<https://skilledtradesbc.ca>

Questions? Please ask the Information Staff at the Central Library or telephone 604-331-3603.

Please note that the information in this guide is also available online through the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre website at <https://www.vpl.ca/siic>.