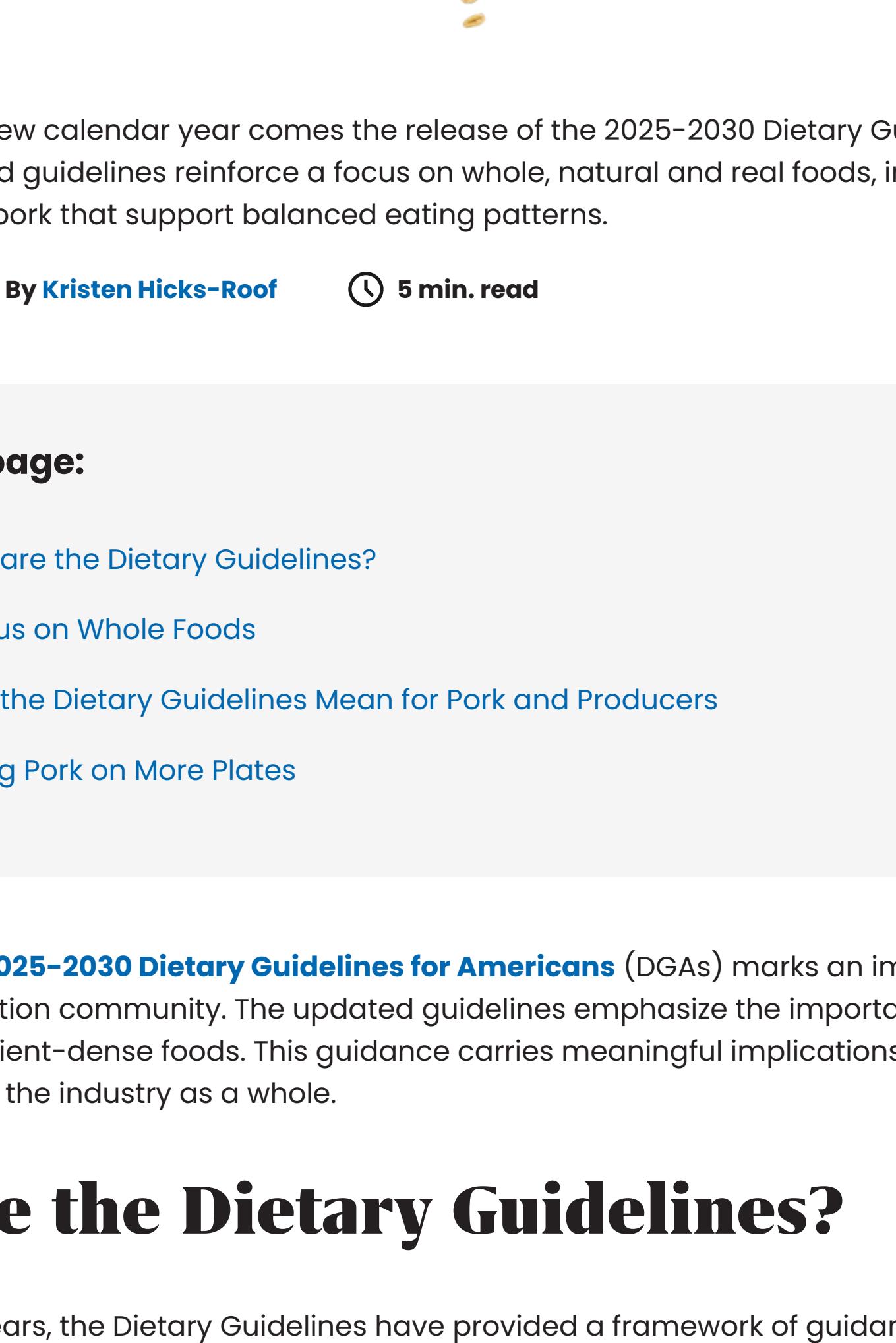


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What the New Dietary Guidelines Mean for Pork and Producers



With the start of a new calendar year comes the release of the 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). The updated guidelines reinforce a focus on whole, natural and real foods, including nutrient-dense proteins like pork that support balanced eating patterns.

January 26, 2026 By Kristen Hicks-Roof 5 min. read

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The release of the [2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGAs) marks an important moment for the health and nutrition community. The updated guidelines emphasize the importance of eating real, whole and nutrient-dense foods. This guidance carries meaningful implications for consumers, pork producers and the industry as a whole.

What are the Dietary Guidelines?

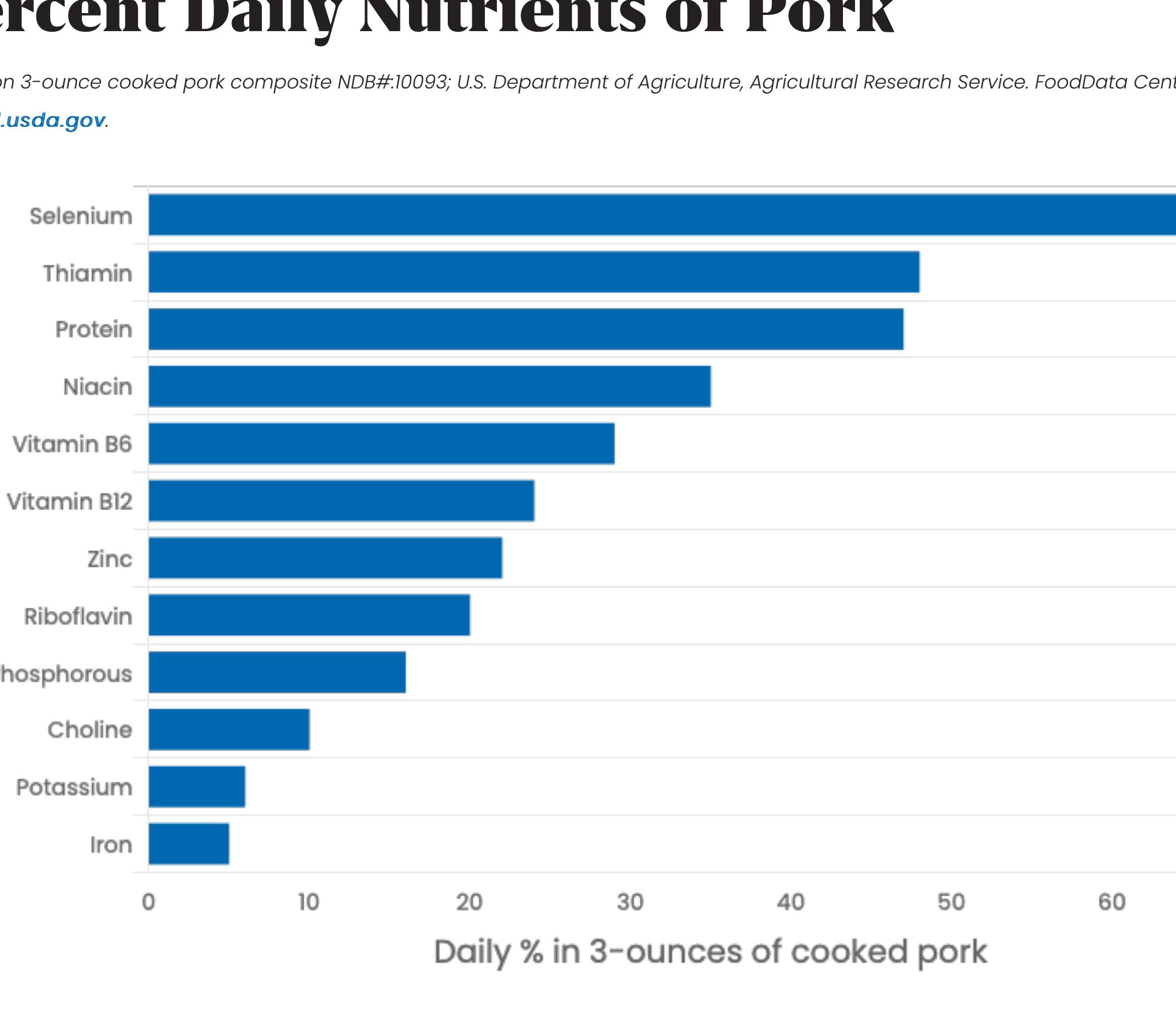
For more than 40 years, the Dietary Guidelines have provided a framework of guidance on what to eat and drink to meet nutritional needs, promote health and prevent disease. Since 1980, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have updated the DGAs every five years.¹

As a registered dietitian and director of human nutrition for NPB, I participated [multiple times](#) in the public comment period throughout the DGA process, offering peer-reviewed scientific research to the committee for consideration. As a Checkoff program, NPB is prohibited from influencing government policy or action.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans serve as the nation's national nutrition recommendations that directly inform procurement standards in all federal feeding programs including, schools and day-care facilities, military nutrition and federal cafeterias. Federal feeding programs impact 1 in 4 Americans.^{2,3}

A Focus on Whole Foods

The new dietary guidelines place a renewed emphasis on simple, whole food dietary patterns. One of the most visible updates is the shift from the MyPlate graphic back to a pyramid-style format. The updated imagery incorporates minimally processed whole foods, underscores balance and variety across food groups, and encourages consumption of protein, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.



The updated pyramid-style visual replaces the MyPlate graphic.

Beyond the visual changes, the DGAs reinforce several key principles that shape how Americans are encouraged to eat. The primary adjustments include:

- **Prioritizing high-quality, nutrient-dense protein foods** as part of a healthy dietary pattern
- **Consuming a variety of protein foods**
- Including eggs, poultry, seafood and red meat (such as pork), as well as a variety of plant-sourced protein foods like beans, peas, lentils, legumes, nuts, seeds and soy.
- **Eating more protein**
- Serving goals: 1.2–1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day, adjusting as needed based on individual caloric requirements. This is a 50–100% increase from the previous recommendations of 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram body weight.
- **Limiting ultraprocessed foods and added sugars**
- Consuming meat with no or limited added sugars, refined carbohydrates or starches, or chemical additives. If preferred, flavor with salt, spices and herbs.
- **Increasing recommendations for full-fat dairy and saturated fats***

*Note: Individuals with certain chronic conditions may benefit from personalized dietary approaches, including lower-carbohydrate eating patterns. Consumers should work with qualified health care professionals to determine the most appropriate diet based on individual health needs.

What the Dietary Guidelines Mean for Pork and Producers

The updated dietary guidelines recognize the key strengths of pork as a high-quality, nutrient-dense protein that fits well within recommended eating patterns.⁴ With an increased emphasis on whole foods and protein intake, pork continues to align with guidance that prioritizes nutrient density and variety.

Percent Daily Nutrients of Pork

Based on 3-ounce cooked pork composite NDB#10093; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. FoodData Central, 2019. fdc.nal.usda.gov.



The DGAs reinforce a high-quality animal source protein. Pork producers are well-positioned to meet demand with pork cuts that support eating patterns outlined in the dietary guidelines, and it's a carrier food that helps to improve key nutrient intake and adequacy for Americans of all ages and ethnicities.^{5,6,7} As a "friend to all foods," pork supports variety and adequacy, including plant-forward meals and fruits matching the recommendation to "eat a variety of colorful, nutrient-dense vegetables and fruits."

As mentioned by USDA Secretary Brooke Lierman during the press conference, pork is nutrient-dense and an affordable protein for the American people.⁸

Putting Pork on More Plates

The updated DGAs are creating opportunities for the pork industry to proactively engage with consumers, health professionals and other stakeholders. As protein intake and nutrient density take on greater prominence, pork can help lead conversations around balanced diets, fresh protein options and real food

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