



Lamb shoulder



Beef rib



Beef shin



Beef brisket

A CUT ABOVE

We have some of the finest meat in the world. But do we make the most of it? Three of Wales' best traditional butchers give us their top tips for choosing the choicest cuts

You don't need to take our word for it. Welsh Beef and Lamb has Protected Geographical Indication status which means it's unique - up there with the very best. Unsurprisingly, traditional butchers Chris Hayman, from Blackwood, William Glyn Owen, from O.G.Owen in Caernarfon, and Martin Player from Whitchurch, Cardiff think you're missing out if you're not featuring this fantastic Welsh produce on your weekly menu.

"Welsh lamb and beef is renowned around the world. It has a protected geographical indication status (PGI) from the European Commission. Basically they've recognised that nowhere else does lamb and beef like it - due to our wonderful Welsh landscape and the excellent conditions in which it's raised," explains Chris. Conditions that Will says ensure "the animals drink pure water and feed only on the finest grass." Martin is keen to expand further: "PGI means there is a full line of traceability, that the animal has been reared only in Wales. The animal husbandry has been the highest standards. That comes out in the quality and flavour of the meat."

But it's not just provenance that gives great texture and flavour is it? How meat is prepared and matured is a crucial part of the equation too. Martin explains "A good butcher will take pride in the meat they source, how and where it was reared. They will mature the beef and lamb for the appropriate times. This is crucial for

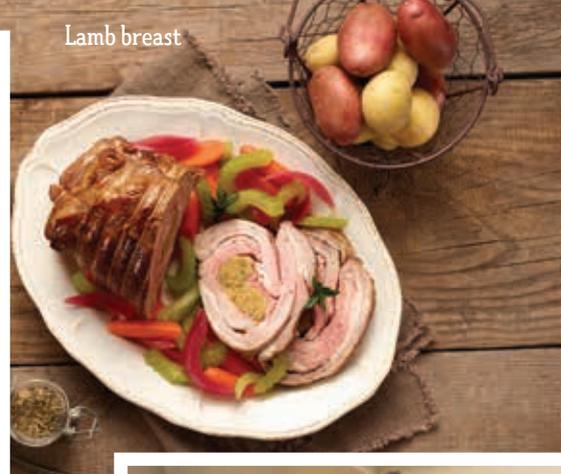
improved flavour and tenderness. They will cut and prepare the carcass to a high standard. It is a skill that takes many years to learn. A supermarket is less likely to spend the time or money on dry ageing or trimming the meat."

You might think that would make butcher-bought meat more expensive, but that's often not the case. "A big misconception is that a butcher is more expensive than the supermarket," Martin agrees. "People only look at the price on the pack in the supermarket. Next time look at the price per kilo. You might be surprised!"

And of course you get more than just a great quality product. Buying great quality Welsh beef and lamb is only part of the deal. "A good quality butcher can offer more than just excellent quality meat," explains Chris. "Cooking advice, recipe recommendations, full traceability, excellent service and passion are just a few things a customer can't get in the supermarket."

TOP CUTS FOR VALUE

So what are their tips for getting the very best from our uniquely wonderful beef and lamb? If value is your priority, Chris suggests buying shin beef. "It's a fantastic and very under used cut of beef. The flavour is unquestionable and trimmed correctly it's a very lean cut. It's perfect for hearty stews or minced in a tasty cottage pie." Will and Martin are big fans of brisket: "If



you cook it slow it allows the abundance of connective tissue to break down and gelatinize into a rich tender cut of meat, ideal for pot roasting,” says Will and Martin adds “A piece of boneless brisket can be slow roasted, braised and shredded and it’s a great cut to marinate. Brisket can go a long way if you are having a house full or party.”

For great value lamb, Chris points to breast of lamb. “It’s another cut that’s very under used now, but is excellent for flavour and it’s a very cheap cut. It can be stuffed and slow roasted, diced for cawl or even marinated on the BBQ and cut into ribs.” Will suggests shoulder of lamb. “Meat from lamb shoulder is full of flavour. Cook the shoulder nice and slowly so the fat will melt into the meat giving you a fantastic succulent roasting joint that’s cheaper than a leg of lamb.” Martin agrees, “There’s nothing better for flavour. It’s another great slow roasting cut that you can do loads with. Definitely the sweetest part of the lamb. Delicious!” adds Martin.

THE TASTIEST OF THE LOT

And how about buying for the tastiest cuts, that special occasion? Chris is emphatic on this one: “You’ll struggle to beat a dry-aged Ribeye steak when it comes to flavour. It has great marbling and fat content. Sear it in a hot pan to get great caramelisation on the outside and soft juicy meat inside. It’s fantastic!” Will’s a fan of rib-eye too thanks to excellent marbling “giving it loads of flavour and providing the fat needed to help it stay tender.” Martin opts for brisket again: “The flavour is so good. Roasted slowly it will be as tender and taste as good as any joint.”

And for lip-smacking lamb? Martin’s not budging on shoulder either, but otherwise he suggests boneless leg steak “if time is not on your side”. Chris on the other hand goes for a classic French trimmed rack of lamb: “It not only looks impressive but has an excellent flavour and tenderness. It’s also a great flavour carrier for a herb crust or marinade.” Will comes up with yet another option: “Lamb rump (chump), where the top of the leg meets the loin, is a lean cut of meat with a generous layer of fat to keep the meat juicy. Unlike the beef rump, lamb rump isn’t that popular, but it definitely should be.”

“For melt in the mouth beef,” says Chris “fillet is always going to be a winner for tenderness. Tucked away under the rib cage it does very little work which gives it such a soft texture.” Will agrees adding that “Tenderloin filet also known as filet mignon is a delicious steak.” Whilst admitting fillet is tender

Martin adds that it “lacks the flavour I would get from another cut of steak.” Looks like we’d better change the subject!

THE SECRETS ARE OUT!

What about cuts that not many know about but should? Do butchers have their secrets that they keep just for their best customers? Martin reckons chefs have discovered most butchers’ secret cuts but Chris has a tip for beef: “Something you won’t find in many places but a good butcher will have or will order for you is hanger steak, also called onglet. It is a fantastically flavoursome cut. You need to cook it medium rare to maintain its tenderness.” Martin’s left-fielder is Feather cut: “This cut is beautiful when braised slowly or shredded. It is also the cut that the flat iron steak comes from.”

For lamb Chris rates neck as massively under-appreciated. “Its flavour and sweetness when slow cooked is fantastic. All hard working muscles build up excellent muscle structure and flavour but need slow cooking to deliver the tenderness.” For Martin and Will, it’s breast of lamb. “Boned and rolled then roasted slowly.”

ALL-TIME FAVOURITES

When it comes to their own personal favourites, rib of beef on the bone is the cut of choice in the Hayman household. “It’s a family favourite for Christmas or a special Sunday roast,” he says. “Excellent fat cover and marbling give this joint a fantastic flavour and succulence.” Will goes for a classic sirloin steak “with plenty of covering and taste, I love a tender and juicy sirloin – mouthwatering!” For Martin it’s a flat iron steak: “This is my favourite steak when prepared correctly. A couple of minutes in a hot pan is all that’s needed. It’s really important to then let it rest for 5 minutes. Then slice. It’s as tender as fillet when cooked properly but with way more flavour.” And he has form on this. He previously won best Welsh beef product at the Q Guild Smithfield awards with his flat iron steak marinated in coffee and black pepper.

For lamb, all three are in agreement. It has to be shoulder. “Slow roasted on the bone, it goes a long way too. Great stock from it for the gravy,” says Martin. Will agrees “Sweet in taste and a bit of natural good fat.” Chris adds “Yes. Shoulder of lamb is a firm favourite of mine. Slow cooked on the bone it gives an excellent sweet yet tender meat that literally falls off the bone.”

National Butchers’ Week, 11th-17th March 2019
www.nationalbutchersweek.co.uk



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