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# chef'Special

Issue 40/april•may 2002

**KID CUISINE**  
**Time for Tapas**



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CURRY COMP - P.6**

# chef's special

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**Cover**

*Char-grilled mince skewers with  
tomato sauce and pita bread.*

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the latest issue of Chef's Special.

We're very excited about our new curry competition. Now winter is snapping at our heels, it seems the perfect time to set loose your curry creation skills! If you think your curry deserves to be on our front page, turn to page 6 for all the details and start grinding those spices!

This issue also looks at the vexed question of food for kids. Is there life beyond burgers and nuggets? We give you some guidelines and ideas.

For slightly older customers, we look at the food of Andalusia in southern Spain, especially its gift to the culinary world, tapas.

We catch up on what's happening with MLA's ongoing nutrition campaign, and give you the chance to send in for a free publication featuring healthy red meat recipes.

Matching cut and cooking method can have a big impact on your bottom line.

Our chart will help guide you in making decisions about a host of popular - and lesser-known - cuts. We also give you a rundown on lamb offal cuts - buying them, basic preparation techniques and tips. Look out for a guide to beef offal in our next issue.

We visit picturesque Skillogalee Winery & Restaurant in South Australia's beautiful Clare Valley, for a taste of some local cuisine, while our Classic Combos page looks at the rise and fall of the mixed grill, and how to bring this Aussie favourite up to date.

If you would like recipes for the dishes photographed for this issue, don't forget to send us your stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Culinary regards,



Lachlan Bowtell  
National Operations Manager, Marketing  
Meat and Livestock Australia

# STILL FEELING GOOD!

The latest red meat nutrition campaign from Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) has shifted into a higher gear, with the second television commercial, "Training", hitting screens nationally from April.

The basis of the 'Red Meat. Feel Good.' campaign is the need to eat red meat 3 to 4 times a week to maintain feelings of wellbeing and vitality.

There's no lack of scientific support for such a proposition. Last year, the Red Meat & Health Expert Advisory Committee's report, *The Role of Red Meat in Healthy Australian Diets*, found that lean red meat has an important place in a healthy diet and should be consumed this often. It estimated that some 50% of women and 40% of men currently eat red meat less often than this.

Their report noted that red meat supplies important nutrients, including protein, iron, zinc and vitamin B12, while containing relatively low levels of fat and cholesterol.

The first TV commercial, featuring a group of dancing butchers doing the "Red Meat Vitality Boogie", went to air earlier this year. The new "Training" ad features a boy whose soccer coach puts him on a training course that includes 3 meat meals a week.

As well as television, there is radio and magazine advertising and in-store activity. All of this will be in addition to the regular beef and lamb campaigns.

For the foodservice sector, MLA has produced new publications to encourage the creation and menuing of delicious, nutritious red meat meals.

The high-profile campaign means beef and lamb will be top-of-mind with diners, with very positive associations. Savvy foodservice operators will take advantage of all this activity to feature beef and lamb on their menus right now.

## YES

Please send me a free copy of our new recipe brochure *Red meat recipes for success*.  
Return this coupon by mail to *Red meat recipes for success Offer*,  
PO Box 1514, Crows Nest 2065 or by fax (02) 9875 5504

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CS#40

# Family-friendly FOOD

It's not just adults who are eating out more often today, it's the whole family. Lifestyle and demographic changes mean today's youngsters visit restaurants and cafes much more regularly than their parents did at the same age.

And parents want to be able to enjoy tasty, varied food when they take their children out, not be confined to a limited-menu "family restaurant". As a result, eateries that offer family-friendly food can gain an advantage.

Have you ever looked at the token children's menu some establishments offer? It seems to be practically identical everywhere. Burgers, hot dogs, nuggets, and do you want fries with that?

It's not that younger diners only enjoy junk food. Apart from a lack of thought put into kids' menus, any inclination towards takeaway-style options has more to do with how they're eaten.

Kids are mortified if their parents cut up their food for them in public, but they're also wary of things they can't eat easily, without making a mess. It's all about looking grown-up. But there are plenty of dishes they can eat with their hands, or without a knife, without ending up with more on their clothes than in their mouths.

It's also worth remembering that today's children may have more sophisticated tastes than you would expect. Even if mum and dad are very Anglo, meat-and-three-veg types (which is unlikely), their kids may have been chowing down on curry at the local child-care centre since they were toddlers. Long day-care centres which provide a cooked lunch also tend to ramp up the garlic content in winter, to try and prevent wholesale outbreaks of sniffles and sore throats.

But children are an unpredictable audience, because they're still growing and developing their tastes. Apparently, a child has to taste something several times before they can safely say whether they like the flavour or not, so the child who loved polenta last week may refuse to touch it this time around.

Children also change their tastes as they age. This is particularly noticeable in the early school years, when they may become more conservative in their likes and dislikes as part of the socialisation process.

They're also prone to develop a sudden and unexplained aversion to certain foods, which may last a few days or several years. It's safest not to force the issue when this happens. Subtle flavours may also escape the under-12s - avocado springs to mind.

In the long term, fostering an enjoyment of dining-out among your youngest customers makes good sense: in another 10 years, the obnoxious 8-year-old who refused to eat something because there was "green stuff" in it will be looking for somewhere to take his girlfriend.

Here are a few ideas for feeding the young ones.

## Platters without splatter

Antipasto or mezze platters can be a great idea for kids. They love being able to select their own food from the platter, and no-one's going to tell them off for eating dolmades or dipping Turkish bread in the beetroot dip with their fingers. With dips, offer more options than the usual raw vegetable crudites, as these can be difficult to manage when strategic teeth are missing. Sweet potato chips are a popular dipper. Beef & bean nachos are another winner - fun, tasty and absolutely fine to eat with their hands.

## Kids like things with handles

Well-trimmed Frenched lamb cutlets are a great choice, especially if they're reasonably small (similar to those often served at cocktail parties). Again, this is substantial finger food. But skewers are also wonderful for kids. Chunks of marinated beef or lamb and a variety of vegetables are delicious and attractive when served skewered, or you could try moulding spiced minced beef or lamb around the skewer before char-grilling. If you are worried about young customers injuring themselves on the skewers, use bamboo skewers (soak for an hour before use) and cut off the sharp end once you have loaded them with food.

## Have a ball

Kids also love meatballs, whether they're Italian, Middle Eastern, Swedish or Asian-inspired. Served with a dipping sauce, they can be eaten by hand or with a fork, or try slipping them into pita bread with salad and sauce. Sensationally simple.

### Pasta masters

This is a generation raised on pasta - fresh, dried, long, short, filled, hollow, you name it. For maximum ease-of-eating, offer short pasta like penne, shells, farfalle or spirals, rather than the longer types which need to be wound around the fork, or small filled pasta like ravioli or tortellini. Gnocchi is also an option, especially when based on a sweetish vegetable like pumpkin. Bolognese is obviously a favourite sauce, but try experimenting with varieties based on Italian sausage meat.

### Favourite fare

Finally, don't forget the classics. I've yet to meet a child that could resist roast lamb (even if mum does have to cut it up), while slow-cooked dishes like osso bucco, or navarin of lamb also have a winning strike rate. Kids often dislike foods that need a lot of chewing, regarding them as hard work, which may be why braises go down so well.

Generally, if a dish works well for your adult customers, their children will probably enjoy it too, provided it's not overly spicy, too difficult to chew, or too expensive to order for a child.



Lamb mini roast with  
roast vegetable gnocchi.

As the colder weather begins to bite, few things are as satisfying and enjoyable as sitting down to a hearty, steaming bowl of curry - with all the trimmings, of course.

Curries may have originally been developed for hot climates - because they generate sweat (and, before refrigeration, often covered the taste and smell of spoiled meat) - but they fill the bill brilliantly in winter.

The word curry is an Anglicised version of *kari*, a Tamil word meaning sauce. Today, we take it to mean a spicy meat or vegetable dish with a sauce, usually served with rice and often with other accompaniments. The same generic terms is used for dishes from the subcontinent, both fragrant and fiery, as well as for the very different versions served in South-East Asia.

Some chefs avoid preparing curries, because they believe the appearance of the dish is unappealing. But a curry doesn't have to be soupy or wet-looking, as our photograph makes clear.

This is a *rendang*, the dry beef, lamb or goat curry claimed by both Indonesia (especially Sumatra) and Malaysia. Traditional flavourings can include cinnamon, cardamom, star anise, red chilli, turmeric, tamarind, coconut, coconut milk, galangal, lemongrass and kaffir lime and salam leaves. The mix of spices changes with the region.

Tradition says a good *rendang* takes 4 hours to cook and can last 2 weeks, which makes it popular with Mecca-bound pilgrims - sometimes it's even called "Travellers' Food". The dish is considered ready when the sauce is very dry, the meat well-browned and a film of red oil has formed on the top.

Our challenge to you is to prove your curry credentials by sending us your favourite beef, lamb or goat curry recipe. The winner will be featured on the cover of the next issue of *Chef's Special*.

**Send your entries to  
Curry Competition,  
P.O. Box 1514,  
Crows Nest, NSW 2065 now!  
Entries must be received by  
Friday, May 10, to qualify.**

## IS YOUR CURRY A WINTER WINNER?



*Beef Rendang  
Ian Fitzpatrick,  
Ian's Kitchen NSW.*

# FINDING THE PERFECT MEAT MATCH

Even the best quality meat is easy to spoil by choosing an inappropriate cooking method. Matching cut and cooking method not only gives you better results, it can also bolster the bottom line by ensuring you are buying the right cut for the purpose you have in mind.

In the same way a braising cut will not perform well if it's char-grilled, a prime cut suitable for dry heat cookery will not give you a good result if cooked using long, moist cookery methods.

The amount and type of connective tissue in a cut is vital when considering which method to use. Collagen and elastin are major components of connective tissue.

Collagen will become gelatinous and tender if a slow, moist method is used, and acidic and enzyme marinades or mechanical tenderisation can also soften collagen. Elastin will not soften during cooking - heat causes it to harden. Removing the yellow elastin before cooking is the best bet.

Generally, dry heat methods like grilling, char-grilling, pan- and wok-searing and roasting suit cuts with less connective tissue, while those with more connective tissue are best cooked using one of the moist heat methods. These include braising, stewing, pot roasting, steaming, poaching and simmering.

The tables below should be taken as a general guide only - as always, there are exceptions. For example, while tenderloin would not perform especially well if braised or stewed, it is sometimes poached, as in the Japanese "fondue" *shabu shabu*.

It should also be noted that some cuts with higher amounts of connective tissue can be roasted, but require special treatment, such as larding and barding or slow-roasting. And some cuts listed as only suitable for moist cooking, such as lamb shanks, may be suitable for "twice-cooked" presentations.



Twice-cooked braised shanks with glazed baby onions and quandongs.

# MATCHING CUT AND

Beef hindquarter cuts	Alternative names	Amount of connective tissue	Suitable for dry cooking	Suitable for roasting	Suitable for moist cooking
Hindshank	Shin, Gravy beef	Higher	✗	✗	✓
Topside (Inside)	Topside	Lower	✗	✓	✓
Topside steak		Lower	✗	✓	✓
Topside schnitzel		Lower	✗	✓	✓
Thick Flank		Lower	✗	✗	✓
Knuckle	Round or American Sirloin Tip	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Knuckle steak	Round steak	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Knuckle schnitzel	Round schnitzel	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Knuckle Undercut	Round Undercut	Lower	✗	✓	✓
Knuckle strips, diced, mince	Round strips, diced, mince	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Eye of Knuckle	Eye of Round	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Eye of Knuckle medallion	Eye of Round medallion	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Knuckle Cover		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Knuckle Cover minute steak, schnitzel		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Silverside (Outside)		Higher	✓	✓	✓
Eye Round	Girella, Eye of Silverside	Higher	✗	✓	✓
Outside Flat		Higher	✗	✓	✓
Outside minute steak	Silverside minute steak	Higher	✓	✓	✓
D-Rump	Rump	Lower	✓	✓	✓
D-Rump steak	Rump steak	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Rump	American Sirloin	Lower	✓	✓	✓
Tri-tip		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Tri-tip strips, diced, minced		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Eye of Rump		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Eye of Rump medallion		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Rump Centre		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Rump Centre steak		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Rump Cap		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Rump Cap minute steak, schnitzel		Lower	✓	✓	✓
Tenderloin	Filet	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Butt Tenderloin	Butt Filet	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Tenderloin Centre Cut	Filet Centre Cut	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Tenderloin medallion	Filet steak, Tourneidos	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Tenderloin Tail	Carpet bag	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Striploin	Sirloin, Back Steak	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Striploin steak	Sirloin steak, Entrecote	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Shortloin		Lower	✓	✓	✗
T-Bone steak		Lower	✓	✓	✗
Flank steak	Skirt steak, London Broil steak	Lower	✗	✓	✓

  

Beef forequarter cuts	Alternative names	Amount of connective tissue	Suitable for dry cooking	Suitable for roasting	Suitable for moist cooking
Beef Ribs - OP (Prepared)	Standing Rib Roast	Lower	✓	✓	✗
Rib steak - bone-in	Rib steak	Lower	✓	✓	✗

  

Spencer roll	Alternative names
Rib Ends	
Short Ribs	Ribs
Brisket	
Cube Roll	Rib Eye, Scotch Fillet
Cube Roll steak	Rib Eye steak, Scotch Fillet
Chuck	
Chuck steak	
Blade	Clod
Bolar Blade	
Bolar Blade minute steak	
Oyster Blade	
Oyster Blade steak	
Chuck Tender	
Foreshin	Shin, Gravy beef
Shin bone-in	Beef Osso Bucco

  

Beef offal cuts	Alternative names
Veal Brain	
Beef Tongue (Swiss Cut)	
Beef Cheek (Papillae Off)	
Beef Tail	Oxtail
Veal & Beef Liver	
Veal & Beef Kidney	
Beef Heart	
Beef Tripe (scalded)	
Veal Thymus Gland	Veal Sweetbread

  

Lambo leg cut	Alternative names
Leg - Chump On	Leg, Gigot
Leg - Chump Off	Leg - Semi Boneless
Leg Chop	Leg Steak
Leg Shank Bone	Easy Carve Leg
Leg - Shank Off, Boneless & Rolled	Boneless Leg
Leg Chump	Sirloin
Leg Chump chop	Sirloin steak or chop
Topside (Inside Round)	
Topside steak	Topside medallion
Topside schnitzel	Escalope
Knuckle (Sirloin Tip)	Round
Knuckle steak	Knuckle medallion
Knuckle schnitzel	Escalope
Silverside (Outside Round)	
Silverside schnitzel	Pailard

# COOKING METHOD

Lower	✓	✓	✗				
Higher	✗	✓	✓	Eye of Silverside	Grelle	Lower	✗ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✓	✓	Rump		Lower	✗ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Leg strips, diced, mince		Lower	✗ ✓ ✓
Lower	✓	✓	✗	<b>Lamb loin cuts</b>	<b>Alternative names</b>	<b>Amount of connective tissue</b>	<b>Suitable for dry cooking</b>
Lower	✓	✓	✗	Saddle		Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Short Saddle		Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Short Saddle chop	Barnley chop	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Contains a number of muscles with varying amounts	✗	✓	✓	Backstrap		Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Loin		Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Loin - Boneless & Rolled		Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✓	✓	✓	Loin Noisettes	Loin Rosettes	Lower	✓ ✗ ✓
Lower	✓	✓	✓	Loin chop	Short-Loin chop, Mid-Loin chop, Rib chop, 1-Bone chop	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Shortloin	Mid-Loin	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Shortloin - Boneless & Rolled	Mid-Loin - Boneless & Rolled	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Eye of Shortloin	Eye of Loin, Fillet	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
<b>Amount of connective tissue</b>	<b>Suitable for dry cooking</b>	<b>Suitable for roasting</b>	<b>Suitable for moist cooking</b>	Tenderloin - Butt Off	Fillet	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✓	✓	✗	Rack	Hotel Rack, Best End	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Rack - Frenched	Hotel Rack, Best End	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Rack Cutlet - Frenched	Rib Cutlet	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Crown Rack	Guard of Honour	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✓	✓	✗	Breast & Flap		Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✓	✓	✓	<b>Lamb forequarter cuts</b>	<b>Alternative names</b>	<b>Amount of connective tissue</b>	<b>Suitable for dry cooking</b>
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Forequarter		Higher	✗ ✓ ✓
Higher	✗	✗	✓	Square Cut Shoulder	Shoulder	Higher	✗ ✓ ✓
Lower	✓	✓	✓	Square Cut Shoulder - Boneless & Rolled	Shoulder - Boneless & Rolled	Higher	✗ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Square Cut Shoulder chop	Shoulder chop	Higher	✗ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Shoulder Rack	Four Rib Rack, Middle Neck roast	Higher	✗ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Neck	Scrag End	Higher	✗ ✗ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Neck Fillet roast - Boneless & Rolled	Middle Neck Roast	Higher	✗ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Forehank	Drumstick	Higher	✗ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	<b>Lamb offal cuts</b>	<b>Alternative names</b>	<b>Amount of connective tissue</b>	<b>Suitable for dry cooking</b>
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Lamb Tongue (Short Cut)		Higher	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Lamb Brains		Lower	✗ ✗ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Lamb Liver	Lamb's Fry	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Lamb Kidneys		Lower	✗ ✗ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Lamb Heart		Higher	✗ ✗ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Lamb Tripe (scalded)		Higher	✗ ✗ ✓
Lower	✗	✓	✓	Lamb Thymus Gland	Lamb Sweetbread	Lower	✓ ✓ ✓

industry profile

# VINEYARD, VERANDAHS AND VIEWS

IF THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY'S MANTRA IS "LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION", THEN DIANA PALMER'S IS "INGREDIENTS, INGREDIENTS, INGREDIENTS".

*Slow-braised lamb shanks  
with potato mash and gremolata.*



Fresh, quality ingredients are the driving force behind the modern Australian food she serves at Skillogalee Winery & Restaurant, in South Australia's beautiful Clare Valley.

The winery was established in the 1970s, and Diana Palmer and her husband David purchased it in 1989, opening the restaurant in 1990. The restaurant is located in an old settler's cottage, with views over a cottage garden, the vineyards and the bush.

Skillogalee seats 30 people indoors, in two small dining rooms, but more popular options are the verandah and terrace, which can seat 50. There are also a small number of café tables for morning and afternoon tea.

Local ingredients are used wherever possible - from the vineyard itself, the region and the State. But quality, rather than origin, is the strongest force in deciding which products are used.

Beef and lamb are local, from the Burra district, while honey comes from bees in the vineyard. Diana says Skillogalee also produces most of its own herbs, along with some fruit and vegetables, with the rest bought from local growers. Clare Valley poultry, smoked salmon from the Adelaide Hills and South Australian cheeses also feature.

Skillogalee also produces its own chutneys and mustards, which are used in the restaurant and sold at the cellar door; along with an impressively varied range of wines. While the Clare Valley is best-known for riesling (tourists can even follow a 27km Riesling Trail) and shiraz, Skillogalee produces a wide range of wines.

About 50% of all production is riesling, which is used to make a sparkling and a late-picked version as well as the more familiar aromatic dry wine. There's also gewurtztraminer, chardonnay, cabernet and shiraz, as well as a muscat and a port.

"I think all food is wine-friendly somewhere along the line," Diana said. "We make quite a range of wines, so we can usually

recommend a wine for any dish we come up with."

The menu is very much ingredient-driven, and offers "lots of European, some Asian, some African" depending on what's available.

"I like to cook food from different countries around the world, but I'm not an East-West fusion chef," Mrs Palmer said. "If I'm cooking an Indian dish, then it's Indian."

Examples from the Skillogalee menu include:

- Slow-braised lamb shanks with potato mash and gremolata
- Eye fillet of beef with oven-roasted vegetables and a Skillogalee shiraz glaze
- Springs smoked salmon with marinated artichokes, hard-boiled egg and mayonnaise.

The restaurant is open for lunch and morning and afternoon tea 7 days a week, and will also do dinner functions and weddings, as well as providing picnic baskets at 24 hours' notice, usually featuring items from the current menu. The majority of business comes from tourists, with word-of-mouth a valuable tool.

"We get a lot of referrals from interstate and overseas, as well as people coming up from Adelaide to have lunch and do a few tastings," Mrs Palmer says.

And the best thing about living and working in the Clare Valley?

"It's just the most stunning environment - so beautiful. And I love the heritage aspect (The town of Clare was settled in 1840, and some areas of the valley even earlier). I love the fact that we make award-winning wine and that we operate a restaurant which presents the food of our region and our State. I'm very proud of them both," Diana says.

## Attention all Riverina Chefs!

Would you like to be featured in Chef's Special?

We're looking for an establishment in New South Wales Riverina district to profile in an upcoming issue. If you think your operation has what it takes, please contact us as soon as possible at:

Chef's Special Riverina Chef  
PO Box 1514,  
Crows Nest NSW 2065

# Fino, Friends &

ANDALUSIA, IN THE SOUTHERNMOST TIP OF SPAIN, OFFERS A FASCINATING AND VARIED CUISINE WHICH IS DEEPLY MARKED BY HISTORY.

Andalusia - also known as Andalucia - was ruled for 700 years by the Moors, who knew it as al Andalus. The Moorish invaders, mostly Berbers and Arabs, left a lasting culinary legacy (especially in the Granada region), seen today in the generous use of spices and the popularity of lamb and goat.

Spain's links to the New World are also clear, especially in the use of vegetables such as potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum and chilli, which were not available in Europe before Columbus' discovery of the Americas.

Andalusia's best-known gift to the world of food is tapas, the small portions of food served with wine in bars across Spain and around the world. Again, history had a hand in the creation of this tradition.

It is said that when King Alfonso X, known as the Wise, was taken ill, he fortified himself between meals with small bites of food and a little wine. On his recovery, he decreed that inns were not to serve wine without food. Several centuries later, Felipe II passed a similar decree, to prevent public drunkenness.

In Andalusia, especially in wine-making regions, it was necessary to cover the wine with a lid, to protect against dust and fruit flies. Originally, a saucer was used, but following Alfonso's decree, many inns introduced edible covers, such as slices of sausage. Thus the *tapa* - the word means lid or cover - was born.

Today, *tapa*-hopping has become a traditional part of life in Andalusia. *Tapas* are usually enjoyed before a (late - after 2pm) lunch or dinner (9pm or later). Groups of friends wander from one bar (or *tasca*) to another, enjoying a glass of sherry or beer and a few *tapas* - generally the specialties of the house. And the food is always eaten standing at the bar.

Andalusian *tapas* can be as simple as a bowl of salted almonds or marinated olives, but most inns offer a far wider choice. Anything that is easy to eat, so that conversation is not interrupted for too long, can be served as a *tapa*, or a larger portion known as a *racione*.

So *tapas* are not restricted to the fingers-and-fork dishes which immediately spring to mind, like garlic mushrooms or

*patatas brava*. They can be fried, grilled, casseroled or stewed, cold, raw - you name it.

While seafood is important in the Andalusian diet - especially in coastal regions - and pork was traditionally the meat of choice, featuring in the region's famed *jamon* (ham) and *chorizo* (sausages), beef, veal, lamb and goat are all well represented.

Popular offerings include *albondigos* (meatballs) usually made with a mixture of beef or lamb mince and pork mince - in a variety of sauces, including spicy tomato and almond-saffron; *menudo* (tripe), especially when matched with piquant sauces - it also stars in *callos a la madrileña*, a dish of tripe and cattle snouts; and simple stews.

Oxtail stew is a favourite in many areas, including Sherry-style



# Eating on Foot

oxtail in Cadiz, *cola de toro* in Sevilla and another regional variation in Cordoba. Other favoured dishes include *higado con cebolla* – a dish of lamb's liver cooked with onions and white wine, *pimientos rellena* – capsicum stuffed with minced beef, Malaga-style veal – *pinchos morunos*, skewered marinated lamb from the leg, sauteed steak from Cadiz, *esobuco chemari* – a variation on the Italian veal dish, here made with *fino* sherry, and from Granada, where the Moorish influence is strongest, goat in garlic.

A variety of sausages is featured, many blood-based and most flavoured with paprika. Sausages are generally sliced and grilled or poached in wine, while paprika is so pervasive that in the Almeria region it is the basis of a broth.

In Sevilla, where it is said one does not eat, but simply feeds on *tapas*, local veal is a specialty, while lamb stew is featured in Cordoba and the Sherry area of Cadiz. Kidneys in sherry also shine here.

The meat dishes would be intermingled with potatoes, vegetable stews like the *alboronina* of Jaen, which features yellow squash, onion and eggplant, crusty bread, salads and of course, the thick potato omelette known as the *tortilla*.

*Tapas* can easily become a meal in themselves, given a sufficient quantity, and they're a fun and informal way to eat. Traditional Andalusian recipes tend to be earthy and robust in their flavours, good honest food that's made to be enjoyed - and shared.



# OFFALLY NICE....

LAMB OFFAL - ALSO KNOWN AS LAMB FANCY MEATS OR VARIETY MEATS - OFFERS THE CREATIVE CHEF UNIQUE FLAVOURS AND TEXTURES. THEY CAN BE RICH AND CREAMY OR ROBUST AND MEATY, AND DELICATE OR COARSE.

Lamb offal cuts are a feature of most cuisines worldwide, and they team beautifully with fresh ingredients and flavourings from around the world.

Offal also offers nutritional benefits, providing our bodies with essential protein, iron, vitamin A, B group vitamins, zinc, calcium, magnesium and phosphorous.

The secrets to successful offal dishes are establishing a reliable, high-quality supply, and mastering the basic preparation techniques. These are often fiddly and time-consuming, and are probably the main reason many people who enjoy offal rarely prepare it at home.

It's also important to note that offal is more perishable than conventional lamb cuts, and should be used within one to two days of purchasing.

There are two main types of offal: glandular cuts include brains, kidneys and liver; while muscular cuts include tongues and hearts.



*Devilled lambs kidneys with crumbed sweetbreads on garlic croute and parsnip puree.*

## Glandular

### Brains

Brains have a rich, creamy texture and delicate flavour. They are best served pan-seared (crumb or toss in flour first to protect the surface), but can also be poached or shallow-fried. To ensure maximum tenderness, do not overcook, and sear in small batches to prevent a rubbery result. Acidic accompaniments like lemon, vinegar or capers complement the brains' richness.

Lamb brains should be light in colour:

**Basic preparation** - Soak brains 1-2 hours in cold water and lemon juice to remove traces of blood. Place in a saucepan with fresh salted water with lemon juice, bring to the boil and simmer 3-4 minutes until just cooked (this will also whiten the brains). Refresh under cold running water and peel off any outer membrane. Trim the brains and lightly press between 2 plates or trays. Chill until firm and slice in half horizontally or at an angle.

### Sweetbreads

Lamb sweetbreads, or thymus glands, come from the animal's throat area. Long considered a delicacy, they have a tender, delicate flavour. (Sweetbreads from older sheep are inedible). They are best served crumbed or floured and pan-seared, but they can also be poached, braised or shallow-fried. Avoid overcooking or cooking too many at once, for a more tender result.

Fresh sweetbreads are a pale pink - frozen sweetbreads are usually darker.

**Basic preparation** - Soak for 1 hour in cold water and lemon juice. Place in fresh cold water with lemon juice, bring to the boil and simmer 3-4 minutes until just cooked. Refresh under cold water and remove the outer membrane. Trim, press and slice as for brains.

### Liver

Liver, or lamb's fry, has a delicate texture and robust flavour. It is best served pan-seared, but is also suitable for char-grilling, grilling or braising. Cook only until pink for maximum tenderness.

Lamb livers should be light in colour and finely textured. Livers from older sheep are darker and coarser, and should be braised until tender.

**Basic preparation** - Remove the thin outer membrane and remove any remaining tubes or gristle. Before pan-searing, pass slices of liver through seasoned flour.

## Kidneys

Quality lamb's kidneys have a unique texture and rich, meaty flavour, and are best served pan-seared. They can also be grilled, char-grilled or braised. Avoid overcooking - pan-seared kidneys should still be pink inside - and do not leave to simmer in sauces, as this gives a tough texture.

Lamb kidneys should be plump, with a light to medium brown-red colour. Darker kidneys may be tough and should be braised.

**Basic preparation** - Remove outer membrane and any suet, then cut kidneys in half. (Many chefs would also soak kidneys for at least 40 minutes, to remove traces of uric acid). Remove the central white core sinew, then dice or slice as desired.

## Muscular

### Hearts

Lamb hearts are lean and flavoursome, with a dense muscle structure, and are best served braised. They can also be simmered, steamed or stewed, and after being slow-cooked to tender, can be pan-seared, grilled or shallow-fried. Hearts can be rubbery if undercooked - cook until gelatinous and fork tender. Skim as required during cooking, to remove impurities.

Lamb hearts should be pink to cherry red in colour:

**Basic preparation** - Trim off any external fat, cut heart in half and remove vessels and tubes. Slice into strips or dice, tossing in seasoned flour if desired.

### Tongues

Lamb tongues have a delicate flavour and a gelatinous texture when cooked. They are best simmered, but can also be steamed or braised; once tender, they can be pan-seared or char-grilled. Tongues are also available pickled or smoked.

Pickled tongues should be soaked in fresh water for 1-2 hours before use to remove excess brine, and cooking times should be shortened for pickled or smoked tongues. Skim during cooking, and cook until gelatinous - cooking times will depend on the tongue's size.

Lamb tongues should have a speckled, bright pink colour and a smooth texture - the outer skin becomes rough as the animal ages.

**Basic preparation** - Place in fresh, cold water; bring to the boil and simmer 3-4 minutes to blanch. Skim as required. Refresh under cold running water.

# Mixed Thrill!

The mixed grill is an Australian classic, the staple of pub bistros, country cafes and urban diners for decades. It's practically an indoor version of the backyard barbecue, whose iconic status is unquestioned.

But of late, the mixed grill has looked a little tired, and its menu ubiquity has become a thing of the past. Surely it's not that difficult to bring the mixed grill up to date, and return it to its former unchallenged position on the nation's menus?

Using more modern cuts like eye of rump steak and lamb steaks, or Frenched cutlets, and more diverse sausages - the range available these days is amazing, with flavours from around the world. Introducing new flavours through wet or dry marinades, bastes or rubs - the possibilities are endless.

Surprisingly for such a simple and universal dish, the mixed grill was absent from the pages of even the most basic cookbooks for a large part of the 20th century. The pre-war *Australian*

*Cookery of Today* noted that grilling was "suitable only for the best cuts of meat". It did not include a mixed grill, although there were recipes for grilled steaks (rump or fillet), chops coated with herbed breadcrumbs then wrapped in bacon and grilled, grilled savoury chops and grilled cutlets with bananas.

The 1950 edition of *The Commonsense Cookery Book* was also keen on grilling - there were grilled French cutlets with green butter, grilled chops and grilled steak but no mixed grill. *Entertaining with Kerr* (1966) was big on grilled offal - breadcrumbed kidney kebabs, skewered "Sweetbreads Shakespeare" - and featured the obligatory chateaubriand, but again no mixed grill.

In fact, it wasn't until the 1970 tome *The Australian & New Zealand Complete Book of Cookery* (aka the big red one) that we found the mixed grill presented in all its glory - cutlets, steak, kidneys, sausages, bacon, tomato and chips.



Mixed grill of lamb cutlets, rump steak, beef sausage and traditional accompaniments.