

June 2010

**Hi all,**

Well I am glad to be putting my passion for Dexter's and their variety of practical uses on paper for you once more.

This Edition I would like to cover **Aged Beef**.

It seems as though we have given up on trying to shock the diner with what we can put on a plate and pass it off as a taste sensation. Let's face it we are the only country I can think of that still actively eat the animals on its coat of arms!

So as I said we now are trying a new fad [for this generation] of trying to age beef for as long as we can without poisoning our self along the way. We now have beef dry aged for 60 days on sale in Melbourne's top eateries and as you would expect at a premium price.

So what is ageing and how long should we age beef for?

The main reason to age beef after slaughter is to attain a tender cut of beef, most commercial sides of beef would be chilled 24 hours maximum and then cut down into its saleable primal cuts, vacuum packed and sent out to butchers, restaurants and export.

The local butcher will buy a quantity of whole sides and after a day or two cut them into primal. From there he will hang the best cuts for around 7 to 10 days before they are sold, this type of meat is usually the one you buy from him that is cut to order and will cost a good deal more than the boxed beef mentioned before.

We then move into the specialty market of hotel and restaurants that as I said are seeking something new something of exceptional quality that they can market as different and charge a big price on.

Enter the Dry Aged 21, 35 & 60 day product.

This entails hanging the prime cuts on individual hooks in a chiller for the prescribed time, then wrapping in muslin cloth or linen and shipped out to its end user whom must re hang until needed.

Once the product is to be used, the whole outer is trimmed to remove the Black dry skin and reveal the moist meat within. For this reason many dry aged cuts retain all trim and fat to reduce the final loss associated with the pre cook trimming.

So what happens to the meat by hanging around so long?

It decomposes is the short answer, it is however done in controlled conditions in a sterile cool room with complete circulation and filtered air. During this decomposition the natural enzymes tenderize the meat and increase the flavor, often making the final product very rich and concentrated in taste, giving rise to smaller portions sold to diners.

It is worth mentioning that not everyone likes the taste of this product as it becomes Gamey and some people may experience nausea if prone to digestive ailments.

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As I mentioned previously this is a new fad for this generation of diners and the fact is before refrigeration meat was treated this way in every day life with the outer 'off bits' trimmed and what required was then cut from the joint.

So how long should we age beef?

This is your choice, but all meat needs 48hrs in the chiller before it can be easily broken down into primal cuts this gives the meat time to set and pull way from the bone as well as hold shape when sliced.

In my experience 10 days is minimum, that is 2 on the bone 8 off and must be hung in a cool room at 3 Celsius. I would not go past 14 days for the home butcher as after this point sterile environments and equipments become paramount.

So have a go and try your own aged beef at home.

If you have a new spin on this or any interesting method of using our cattle's product I would love to hear from you.

Regards

Matthew Stevens