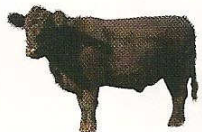


# We are the champions

How did our judges rate the taste of the British breeds?



*Aberdeen Angus*

HARDY, low maintenance, adaptable cattle used for meat and vegetation management. The pure Aberdeen Angus is listed as critical by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST).

*Judges' verdict*

'This is beautiful, pure beef and you can get slightly more flavour from over-cooking it'

**Mark Hix**

'Every restaurant in London has it, but is it pure Aberdeen Angus?'

**Jack O'Shea**

*Dovecote Park, supplier to Waitrose (www.dovecotepark.co.uk)*



*British White*

AN ECONOMICALLY efficient breed that can thrive on very poor pasture.

*Judges' verdict*

'Combination of great texture and taste, soft and tender'

**Mark Price**

'A heavy grain, and the flavour isn't bad'

**Mark Hix**

*Weeton's of Harrogate, Yorkshire (01423 507100; www.weetons.com)*



*Dexter*

THE SMALLEST European cattle breed (it comes from south-west Ireland), it's about half of the size of a traditional Hereford. Dexters were considered a rare breed, but are now categorised as recovering.

*Judges' verdict*

'Intense, almost gamey flavour'

**Mark Hix**

'Like a VW, does its job brilliantly'

**Jack O'Shea**

'My favourite'

**Rebecca Pearson**

*Pike End Farm, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire (01422 823949; www.pikeendfarm.net)*

**2nd**



*Beef Shorthorn (2nd in our tasting)*

THE BREED has evolved over the past two centuries, from Teeswater and Durham cattle. It's usually reared naturally and produces beautifully marbled beef.

*Judges' verdict*

'My critical faculties are a little blunted because I just think it's delicious'

**Carla Carlisle**

'A very good lingering flavour'

**Mark Hedges**

'Needs more fat on it'

**Caroline Cranbrook**

*Browns of Stagsden, Bedfordshire (01234 822330; www.brownsofstagsden.co.uk)*



**3rd**

*Hereford (3rd in our tasting)*

AN ECONOMIC and versatile breed, the Hereford produces more valuable meat per acre of grassland than any other.

*Judges' verdict*

'The Rolls-Royce of today; very moist, lovely texture'

**Richard Lutwyche**

'Very welcoming'

**Carla Carlisle**

'I hate to say it, but I prefer this to my usual Aberdeen Angus'

**Jack O'Shea**

*Llandinabo Farm Shop, Ledbury, Herefordshire (01531 632744; www.llandinabofarmshop.co.uk)*



*Belted Galloway*

ITS EXACT ORIGIN is unknown, but it's thought to come from cross-breeding with Dutch belted cattle. In 2007, the 'Belty' was formally removed from the RBST's watchlist.

*Judges' verdict*

'Flavour combined with juices and satisfaction'

**Fergus Henderson**

*The Butts Farm Shop, South Cerney, Gloucestershire (01285 862224; www.thebuttsfarmshop.com)*



*Highland*

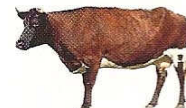
ANCIENT AND HARDY breed from western Scotland, also known as Hairy or Heilan Coo, which has been widely exported.

*Judges' verdict:*

'It has a great colour and is deliciously tender. Great, old-school beef'

**Jack O'Shea**

*Lochcarron Butchers, Lochcarron, Wester Ross (01520 722229; www.highlandcattlesociety.com)*



*Gloucester*

DUAL-PURPOSE BREED, which is good for milk production and is exceptionally docile. The RBST lists it as at risk.

*Judges' verdict*

'A juicy, rich roast beef'

**Carla Carlisle**

'A little like cardboard for me'

**Mark Hix**

*Gurney's Butchers, Over Farm, Gloucestershire (01452 520311; www.over-farm-market.com)*



*White Park*

BRITAIN'S OLDEST native breed, listed as at risk by the RBST. Rustic, adaptable and attractive, it's renowned for hardiness and is ideal for conservation grazing.

*Judges' verdict*

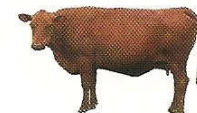
'Fantastic texture'

**Mark Hedges**

'Delicately flavoured'

**Mark Price**

*Gatcombe Farm Shop, Gatcombe Farm, Flax Bourton, Bristol (01275 394404)*



*Red Poll*

ANOTHER ECONOMICALLY efficient breed that can graze on poor soils.

*Judges' verdict*

'Notionally I was committed to the Red Poll but, despite the hope, it's not my favourite'

**Carla Carlisle, who recently bought a herd of Red Poll**

*Oak House Farm Limited, Sproughton, Ipswich (www.oakhousefarm.com)*

FLPA, istockphoto; Dreamstime; Arden



## Cuts above the rest

What makes the ideal stew, steak and casserole? MARK HIX demystifies the cuts

### Leg

*Leg cuts include silverside, roasting and slow cooking, minute steaks*

### Silverside

*Best for salting and slow cooking*

### Topside

*Best for salting and slow cooking*

### Thick flank

*Ideal for slow cooking*

### Rump

*Use rump if you're grilling or roasting*

### Sirloin

*Great for grilling and roasting, or have it raw for carpaccio and steak tartare*

### Fillet

*Also a good choice for grilling, or have it raw for carpaccio and steak tartare*

### Flank

*Good for slow cooking, grilling and steak tartare*

### Fore rib

*Best for roasting and grilling*

### Thin rib

*Good for slow cooking*

### Chuck and Blade

*Use this for mincing and slow cooking*

### Thick rib

*Good for slow cooking*

### Brisket

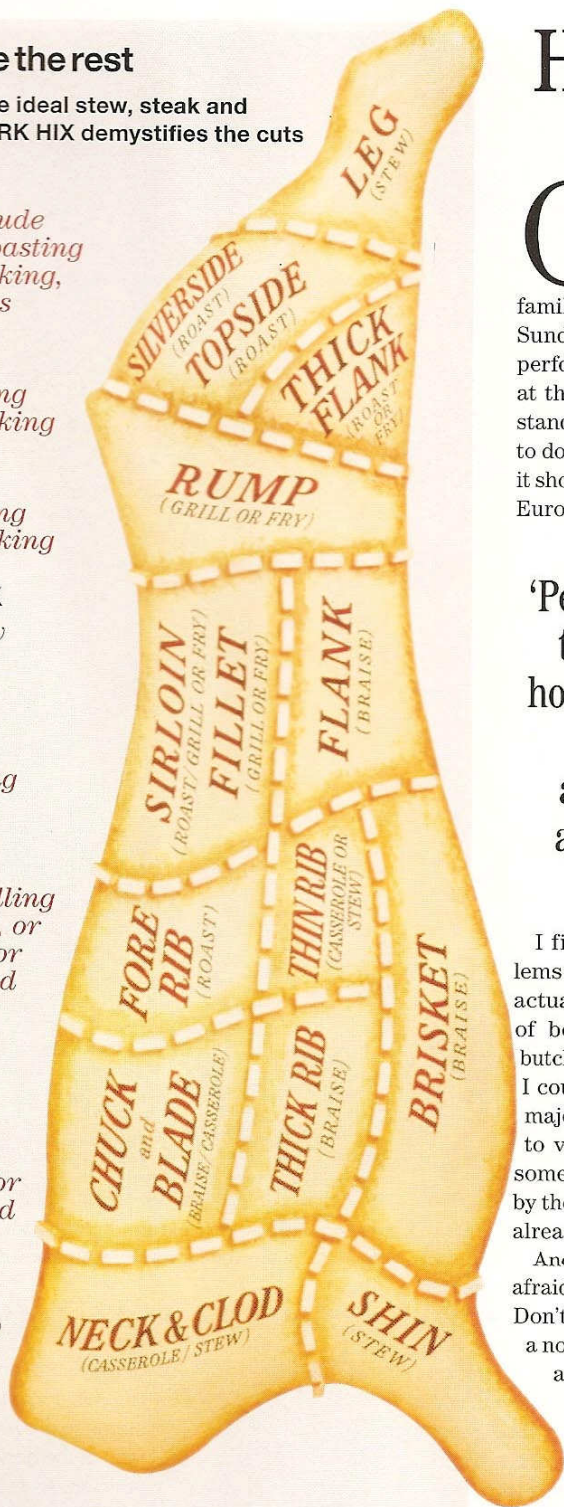
*Good for salting and slow cooking*

### Neck and clod

*Slow cooking*

### Shin

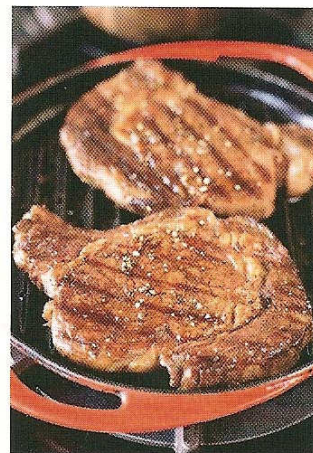
*Also ideal for slow cooking*



# How to cook a steak

It's all in the sizzle, says Mark Hix

**G**ONE are the days when we Britons had the nickname 'roast beef', but many families still do the traditional Sunday roast at home and perform a cremation ceremony at the same time. Our understanding of beef cuts and what to do with them is still not what it should be, compared to other European countries.



A 2cm thick steak only needs three minutes each side for rare

'People are afraid to get the pan hot enough. Don't try to cook a steak under a normal grill'

I find that one of the problems is what the customer actually does with their bit of beef once they leave the butcher's shop or supermarket. I could safely say that a large majority gets overcooked due to various factors. I've seen some steaks cut so thin that, by the time you turn it over, it's already cooked to medium.

Another problem is that we're afraid to get the pan hot enough. Don't try to cook a steak under a normal grill, as it'll just boil and not caramelize and colour in time on the outside to keep the juices in, unless you have an American cooker with a broiler or a built-in barbecue/chargrill.

My preferred choice of pan is a heavy-ribbed griddle pan—it's a must for any serious cook. The secret is to get it almost smoking (with your extractor on full blast, that is), then season your steak with sea salt and coarsely ground black pepper and lightly oil it.

Now, we're ready to go. The minute your steak hits the griddle, it will begin to colour

and seal in the juices, then all you need to do is keep an eye on it and flip it over. A 2cm thick steak will only need about three minutes on each side for rare, and the more steaks you cook, the more familiar you'll get with cooking degrees and when to take it off and stick it on the plate.

The best way to tell if your steak is done is to prod it with your finger—basically, the more giving and spongy it is, the rarer it is, and the firmer it becomes during cooking, the more it's getting cooked.

I'm very keen on buying big thick steaks for two like an old-fashioned porterhouse or T-bone or a rib steak on the bone. These can weigh about a kilo and look really great on the table, where you can just carve off slices as you need them.

Then, there are also the forgotten cuts that need a bit more attention and slow, careful cooking, such as oxtail, featherblade, cheeks and shin. These cuts really are under-used these days, apparently due to people not having enough time to cook—well, that's a lot of nonsense as far as I'm concerned, because a good old-fashioned braise can be cooked in a low oven while you're out or even overnight, or in a specially designed slow cooker. I think some people are just scared to cook. 🐔