

Farmer steaks his claim on depth of flavour



Richard Gunner with Australia's only English longhorn herd at his Meningie farm in southeast South Australia

BY EDWARDS

On the banks of the Coorong, a South Australian farmer is producing some of the world's best steaks from his herd of English longhorns, with more intense marbling than wagyu beef and deeper flavour.

The steaks are so rare they sell at more than \$30 per 100g in the top restaurants, rather than the average \$10 per 100g of beef steak, and people are paying \$310 to share a 1kg rib eye.

Meningie farmer Richard Gunner owns the only English longhorn herd in Australia.

Over five years he has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars importing embryos, crossbreeding and expanding his stud from 10 to his first calving season to 170 head, with another 600 cows in paddocks.

Gunner feeds his cows for 18 months before slaughtering them a month for a select few shipments, compared with 18



Rockpool waiter Craig Cadman with a longhorn steak

HOLLIE ADAMS

months for most other breeds, to ensure marbling is at its best and the flavour its deepest.

"We're not aiming for the world's most tender steaks, we're asking for flavour, we're dry ageing to enhance the flavour, we're finetuning how we're breeding it," Mr Gunner said. "As with wagyu, the marbling is what people are looking for and they can market it

at different levels, but it's the longhorn flavour that's the most important."

The breeding process has been a labour of love for Mr Gunner, who has now produced through three generations of calves.

He has plans to produce enough pedigree stock to kill 10 a week, distributing cuts to Rockpool Bar and Grill and Bistro

Rex in Sydney and Shobosho, Zonfrillo's Orana and Blackwood in Adelaide.

Rockpool Bar & Grill head chef Corey Costelloe said Mr Gunner's meat had an edge to it.

"With a lot of meat that you get nowadays, it's the fat that contains a lot of the flavour. What I find with the Richard Gunner meat is that the actual meat contains a lot of flavour.

"Even though (Gunner's) meats aren't as marbled as others and has a leaner sort of coverage, the meat is really, really flavourful and has a real clean beef flavour to it.

"It's different to a lot of meat these days in the way it's really dynamic, kind of lactic and has a sourness to it that I really like ... the rump in particular is probably my favourite cut."

Mr Gunner's journey to breed and produce English longhorns on his property 140km southeast of Adelaide began in 2012 when he sat down with chef Jock Zon-

frillo to find an alternative to angus cattle, because becoming overused and losing premium status.

Zonfrillo had spent a decade working with the British to define the meat of some breeds, with English longhorns winning out.

The breed almost became extinct in Britain after World War II but numbers rose steadily as the market resurgence began to favour rather than to produce milk and pull.

The English longhorn has since become so revered that last week it was named best rib eye at the World Slaughter in London.

"There's a depth of flavour and complexity that isn't found in other breeds," Zonfrillo said.

"There's a difference in marbling and intermuscular fat that you don't normally see in other grass-fed breeds."

ADDITIONAL REPORT BY OLIVER