THE GREAT BRITISH BEEF RECIPE

Brought to you by The Members of the Devon Cattle Breeders’ Society

Producers of conspicuously good beef since 1884
A generous quantity of a great British native breed

Great beef starts with the breed. The British Isles is blessed with more than its fair share of wonderful native breed cattle, but when it comes to the quality of its beef, the Red Ruby Devon reigns supreme.

Red Ruby Devon cattle have been officially recognised as a breed since 1851 so they have had a few generations to perfect their foraging ability! They have the perfect metabolism for converting grass into premium quality beef which is a great source of natural protein. Why's this important? Well, first because we know that beef reared predominantly on grass is high in healthy Omega 3 (good) fatty acids. Secondly, cattle that are grass-reared take more time to produce, typically 2-3 years. Time spent roaming pasture is not only good for the animal’s well-being, but it also naturally develops muscle and produces slow grown beef. As with most things in life, the best things take time.

Last but not least, the Devon is such a hardy breed and efficient forager, they can produce a great source of healthy protein from land that really cannot be used for anything else such as upland and moors. And whilst they munch, they are keeping those footpaths and by-ways clear so that we can all get out and enjoy our countryside!

Half a lifetime's work of a great British farmer

Once you've got the right breed, the next most important part of the recipe is the care and expertise with which it is reared. Our farmers are world-leaders. Not just in their use of technology and innovation, but also because of things that are less easy to see, but really important to us all, such as their commitment to animal welfare, protection of wildlife, ecosystems, and maintenance of public access to the countryside.

The majority of farmers who keep Red Ruby Devons have done so for their entire working lives, as have their fathers and forefathers. They have helped calve generations of the same cow families and know the quirks and mannerisms of each individual in the herd. Red Ruby Devon cattle are generally reared in what's called “single suckler herds”. That means that cows are kept in their most natural situation – in a herd of family members where the cows have one calf each year which they rear (suckle) through to weaning at about 8 months of age. Farmers with single suckler herds are expert in understanding the needs of their cows through their entire lifetimes, from seeing a calf through its first few precarious days of life, to helping it grow into a strong adult breeding cow. Thanks to the longevity of the Devon, and the expert stockmanship of the farmer, it is not unusual for Devon cows to have 14 calves or more!

“The real wow factor becomes apparent in the eating. I believe it is down to the fine grained texture of slow grown Red Ruby Devon beef which produces smaller protein molecules, helping it to cook much better, maintaining its succulence and flavour.”

Alyn Williams of “Alyn Williams at The Westbury”, London. Michelin starred chef, and National Chef of the Year 2012
A sprinkling of a few 100 acres of great British grass

Being British, sooner or later we had to talk about the weather! Thanks to geography, our small island gets its fair share of the stuff. A lot of it really quite wet, interspersed with a good deal of sunshine and warm air from the Gulf Stream. A perfect recipe for growing grass. Indeed, climate makes our island one of the best grass growing countries in the world. And there is more to the humble green stuff than first meets the eye. Grassland, particularly on unimproved pasture such as is found on upland, moors and old pasture is in fact a complex carpet of perennial grasses with poetic names such as common bent, rye, timothy, clover, fescues, and cocksfoot.

By happy coincidence this rich mix of perennial grasses provides a perfect diet for ruminant animals such as the Red Ruby Devon. And in many livestock areas of the country, such as the south west of England from where the Red Ruby Devon originates, grass grows for 10-11 months of the year which is a perfect environment for naturally rearing beef cattle. Indeed, the combination of native breeds, and swathes of our green and pleasant landscape, creates the perfect environment for sustainably producing healthy beef (and lamb). Grazing Red Ruby Devons and other types of native breeds suited to their local environment, creates a virtuous cycle which benefits the land, the livestock, and people in that we can all enjoy access to the countryside, as well as eating healthy, great tasting meat.

A dash of expertise from a great British butcher

Our abattoirs and butchers might not be the glamour end of the business, but they are so important and in their hands we all place enormous trust in asking them to process our meat for us. Our abattoirs and butchers meet some of the highest standards for welfare and hygiene of anyone, anywhere in the world.

The best way of knowing exactly what you are buying is to buy meat that has the shortest possible route from the farmer to you; good butchers, farm shops or from the farm direct.

As any good butcher will tell you, one of the real benefits of the Red Ruby Devon beef is the balance of fat and muscle. Fat is key to producing flavoursome, tender beef and here’s why. A Red Ruby Devon carcass will have a natural layer of fat all around the outside. This layer of fat is essential when it comes to hanging beef. Without that fat layer, the carcass cannot hang for any length of time. Beef without hanging is like wine without ageing – much less flavour and never really as rewarded to eat as it should be. Secondly, the Red Ruby Devon lays down small amounts of fat within its muscle as it grazes and grows. This is called intra-muscular fat or “marbling”. And marbling is key to eating quality of beef because it ensures the meat is tenderised as it cooks. And finally, Red Ruby Devon beef is exceptionally fine grained which, combined with its marbling, means that every forkful will melt in the mouth, whether you’re having fillet steak, spaghetti bolognaise or a slow-cooked beef hotpot.

“Darts Farm likes to support local breeds which is why we supply Red Ruby Devon beef grown on our farm. The beef is full of flavour because it is naturally marbled.”
Paul Dart, Darts Farm Shop. FARMA Farm Shop of the Year 2015
The Devon Cattle Breeders’ Society was formed in 1884 by a group of south west farmers. The society is a not-for-profit charity. Any profits made are re-invested into maintaining the purity of the breed and promoting the breed and its beef.

Our Patron is HRH The Prince of Wales.

The society has over 600 farming members, all of whom keep Red Ruby Devon cattle. Many sell their own produce direct or through local butchers.

You can find Devons at many of our summer agricultural shows as well as visiting farms, many of whom participate in Open Farm Sunday, or hold open days at other times.

Wherever you live, it's easy to find a local supplier of Red Ruby Devon beef. First stop is our website and click through to the Buying Beef pages. Or get in touch with us and will be happy to put you in touch with a local supplier.

www.redrubydevon.co.uk
dcbs@redrubydevon.co.uk
01404 812800
Beef reared predominantly on grass is a major source of Omega 3 essential (good) fatty acids.

Properly matured, well hung beef should be dry to touch and a dark, wine colour.

A good butcher will hang sides of beef for anytime between 2-5 weeks, in a cold room often located at the back of his shop. This means your butcher will be able to cut you any joint of beef to your exact requirements.

Red Ruby Devons have an especially thick hide (skin) which helps them to thrive in extremes of temperature, both hot and cold. You’ll find Devons happily grazing on top of Exmoor in January, and the pampas of Brazil in August.

The more work the muscle does on the animal whilst it is alive, the greater the flavour of the beef. As well as treating yourself to delicious fillet and sirloin, try some of the harder working cuts which require slower cooking, but are excellent value and have great flavour.

You can see whether a cut of beef is marbled before you buy. Simply look for small flecking of white within the main area of red flesh – that’s marbling and you’ll find it in Red Ruby Devon beef!

The Red Ruby Devon is one of our native breeds recognised by Natural England for its value as a natural conserver of precious, environmentally-sensitive landscapes.