

# MAKE MORE OF MUTTON

## Buyers' Guide to Quality Mutton



### What is Quality Mutton?

Mutton is defined as sheep meat over two years old. In the Victorian period, an ideal animal was around 4 to 6 years old. Until wool became uneconomic in the mid-20th century, mutton was available from both wethers (castrated males used for wool production) producing 'wether mutton', and 'ewe mutton' (from female sheep which are no longer able to produce lambs). Today mutton is almost invariably ewe mutton.

### The Flavour of Quality Mutton

As well as the cultural and culinary heritage of mutton, it is its superb flavour which is its key characteristic. Some say it tastes like a mixture of beef, venison and lamb, with a touch of sweetness. One thing it is not is simply strong lamb!

*"Mutton is one of Britain's glories - crazily neglected."*

Sheila Dillon, Presenter BBC Radio 4, The Food Programme

### Where to buy Quality Mutton

Currently, quality mutton is not available in many large supermarkets. However, increasing numbers of farm shops, farmers' markets, butchers and other independent food shops offer it, or can source it for you, if you ask.

However, for the very best eating experience, it is important that you buy quality mutton, which has been produced for the purpose.



### What to Look for when Buying - the ABCD

**Age:** mutton is usually defined as being 2 years or older;

**Breed:** The Victorians considered the best mutton breeds were from the uplands, downlands and western isles;

**Chilling/hanging:** traditional maturing on the bone for at least 10 days;

**Diet:** The best flavour, and higher Omega 3 levels, are found with grass-fed animals.

*'The haunch is a joint of mutton frequently served up at large and elegant entertainments.'*

John Chalmers Morton, A Cyclopedia of Agriculture (1875)

### Seasonality

The traditional season is autumn & winter, but many suppliers offer it year-round.

### Cooking

Cooking mutton today couldn't be simpler, and the rule is 'slow to be sure'. A few cuts can be cooked quickly by experienced cooks, but most reliably delicious results come from long, slow cooking. With increasingly busy lifestyles, slow cooking has been unfashionable for the last few decades, but now with modern electric slow cookers, especially programmable ones, cooking mutton is so easy.



There are plenty of recipes around - the internet has many.

### National Sheep Association's 'Make More of Mutton' Initiative

The National Sheep Association, with funding from Eblex, HCC and LMCNI, has embarked on a new project to support quality mutton supply chains. Called Make More of Mutton, the work aims to build on the work of HRH's Mutton Renaissance, started in 2004, and to popularise quality mutton, and return the meat to its Victorian pride of place in British cooking.

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