



Best beef on the BBQ ?

For most, BBQ means brochettes, sausages and spare ribs. But a good steak could also be delicious on a BBQ. We tested 11 different rib eye steaks.

The tasting panel was composed of a selection of Belgian and Dutch journalists, Chefs and professionals of the meat industry, amongst them: Richard Thijssen, publisher of Cook Magazine and the Chief Editor Henri Wynants, journalists including Walter Briers from Belgium and Bert Salden from Netherlands but also Grégory Salemi of APAQ-Wthe promotion office of Wallonian Agriculture, the famous TV Chef Bas Lenoire was also part the group.

The tasting session took place at the restaurant “La Tête de Boeuf” specialising, in grilling meats and located in Deigné Ayvaille, one of the most attractive villages in Wallonia. With 20°c more we could have been in Provence. The roasting Chef Pol Maes originates from Flanders, and met his wife at the “Sanglier des Ardennes” in Durbuy. He is a full blooded professional. The village atmosphere is also felt inside the restaurant. Dark wood along the small windows and lots of wine bottles on the bar create a special ambiance. This type of design is now considered as being old fashioned for many but not in this village. We decided to take the bull by the horns and start our mission to find the best beef cut to put on the grill

Watch and taste

About twenty cuts had been selected but only eleven have been approved by the panel. Beef cuts came from all over the world and were served on large platters. First of all the beef was presented raw to assess the colour, the marbling, the fat colour, the structure of the cut and the smell. Interestingly several significant differences have been noted at this stage: some were surrounded by a lot of fat; others had no fat at all. The best cuts looked juicy, marbled with a nice red colour, and once on the grill the fat melts and drips.

The appearance of the cut is important but the taste is essential. Pol the Chef was asked to serve the beef “blue” and warm with a nice crust on the outside, red colour once cut but warm in the core. It sounds difficult to achieve but Pol is an expert and all rib eye cuts were served to the perfection. Beef was only accompanied by bread and water.



Not for amateurs

Scotch Dry Aged beef is very special; it is matured in a chiller between 21 and 28 days on the bone, in a controlled atmosphere for humidity and temperature. The outside dries out and is removed and the inside becomes very tender beef. The taste is “100% pure beef” but possibly not designed for beginners.

The Chianina from Tuscany also fell on our plate. This breed is the largest framed in the world it was unanimously described as beautiful beef but is limited in taste, the animal was possibly killed too young or the beef did not mature long enough.

And the winner is...

The interesting thing is that most of the jury agreed and the differences of opinion about the various meats were minimal. In spite of its success with many restaurants, Simmental beef from Austria was clearly not appreciated, may be the beef was coming from an old cow? Beef Ashdale Finest Quality from MDH in St Pieters-Leeuw collected the largest number of points. The beef comes from the Alec Jarrett plant located near Bristol (south west of England). This enterprise produces cattle on grass, finished with cereals. The meat is matured on the bone and it looked quite appealing raw but not really more than the others but the comments regarding the taste were very highly appreciative: “Very tender with lost of character and excellent texture”, “succulent fat and pronounced taste”. The high score of the Bleue des Prés, placed amongst the three best has to be noted. The meat came from a Belgian Blue cow born in Wallonia and who has had several calves, and then the animal is finished on a special diet that includes linseed.

Results

The following meats have been selected as the best by the panel of tasters:

- 1) Ashdale Finest Quality (MDH, St Pieters-Leeuw)
- 2) Angus, Australia (ISPC, Liège)
- 3) La Bleue des Prés (ISPC, Liège)
- 4) Dry Age Scotch Beef (Van Engelandt, Brussels)
- 5) Irish Hereford (ISCP, Liège)
- 6) Black Angus grass fed from Australia (ISPC, Liège)
- 7) Chianina (Lebouille, Valkenburg)
- 8) US Grain fed (Lebouille, Valkenburg)
- 9) Scotch Aberdeen Angus Orkney (HGC Hanos, Hasselt)
- 10) Irish Aberdeen Angus (HGC Hanos, Hasselt)