



GoodFood Guide

The beef about Wagyu



The general consensus when it comes to Wagyu is that it is a premium beef, but did you know that Wagyu also translates to Japanese cow? ('Wa' means Japanese and 'gyu' means beef.) Indeed, Wagyu is premium beef, but more specifically, it is a breed of cattle native and unique to their Wagyu in Japan.

Another interesting did-you-know: Unlike today, where cattle is largely meant as food for people, cattle was first introduced to Japan in the 2nd century to provide power for rice cultivation.

As draught animals used in agriculture, they were selected for their physical endurance, and the selection favoured those with more intra-muscular fat cells 'marbling' which provided a readily available energy source. Nobles also engaged the use of ox-drawn carts as a form of transport during the Heian Era (794-1868). Eventually, from 1635 to 1868, the cow herd in Japan was closed by mandate of the Shogun. And till this day, except for a short period during the Meiji Restoration in the late 1800's, the national herd remains as a closed population, so outside genetic infusions do not affect Wagyu.

Wagyu is not only rich in fats, it has a rich history too, and numerous outsiders to Japan (including David Blackmore of the famed Blackmore Wagyu) have sought to track down the genetic history of Wagyu cattle. Japanese farmers however, see Wagyu cattle as a gift for future generations, and hence protect it zealously. The unique ability of Wagyu to marble beautifully has rendered the cattle as some sort of intellectual property, with closely guarded secrets to its breeding and rearing.

We have all heard the term 'marbling' used to describe Wagyu, and highly marbled beef essentially means that the muscle is finely interspersed with monounsaturated fat. When cooked, the marbling is absorbed into the muscle, and this gives rise to the 'melt-in-your-mouth' quality and tenderness that is so highly sought after.

Typically, marbling score is used to judge the quality of Wagyu. The higher the fat marbling score, the better the Wagyu is, at least according to plentiful of Western breeders. In Japan, the top grade of beef is also known as A5. Increasingly however, the colour, texture, softness, and flavour of the meat and fat are taken into greater consideration. In addition, some other important traits measured are eye muscle size, eye muscle shape, even marble distribution in the eye muscle, fine marble distribution in the eye muscle, external fat thickness, seam fat thickness, rib thickness, even distribution of marbling throughout the body, carcass weight, average daily gain on feed and the age at slaughter.

With all the different strains of Wagyu and the characteristic of each lineage, the topic of Wagyu can get rather technical, so we'll bring to you the most exciting bits: Two places in Singapore to indulge in some of the finest Wagyu.

Robbins Island Wagyu

Robbins Island Wagyu is a premium beef breed that is known for its high marbling score. It is a cross between Japanese Wagyu and European beef breeds. The breed is known for its high marbling score and its ability to produce high quality beef.

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Cook In!

A4 Toriyama Umami Wagyu

As mentioned above, Wagyu is traditionally assessed based on its marbling score, with higher marbling leading to higher prices. Seeking to break out of convention, Mr Makoto Toriyama, third-generation owner of Toriyama company, together with his cousin Wataru Toriyama, offers us A4 Toriyama Umami Wagyu,

which is exclusively distributed by Huber's Butchery. A4 Toriyama Umami Wagyu is unlike other Wagyu – a great emphasis has been shifted from marbling to its taste. This can be attested by Mr Ryuichi Suzuki, better known as Dr Umami. Dr Umami is the brains behind a highly accurate taste analysis machine that mimics the human tongue and produces scores in each basic taste. Using the taste analysis machine, the umami levels in meat and fat of A4 Toriyama Umami Wagyu is proven to contain a higher level of umami as compared to the average Wagyu available. What this translates to is a product bursting with a wholesome, meaty flavour that calls for one bite after another!

A4 Toriyama Umami Wagyu is priced at \$30.90/100g and sold chilled, available at Huber's Butchery, 18A Dempsey Road, Tel: 6737 1588