

When Rare Cuts Of Wagyu Reign Supreme

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Top local chefs showcase their favourite cut of an increasingly popular Australian brand of wagyu

Quality beef is particularly well-loved among consumers here, especially since the wagyu breed of Japanese beef cattle became a benchmark of how much we enjoy the exceptional when it came to this customary protein. And because we also enjoy having quality choices and the value they represent, a market for wagyu from countries like Australia has grown steadily. One such brand to make its mark here is Westholme from Queensland, Australia, which made its debut in Singapore in 2016 via its current distributor Culina.

To boot, the Westholme herd contains some of the most highly credentialed wagyu cattle to ever leave Japan. It's taken the brand over two decades, but it has built on these strong foundation bloodlines to produce an outstanding product that's born wild, raised roaming vast rangelands eating pristine tracts of Mitchell grass and grain-finished on proprietary blends.



Esquina's head chef Carlos Montobbio, who feels the wagyu oyster blade is an unexpectedly tender and tasty cut, chooses to slow cook it. He serves it thinly sliced, torched and dressed in a little tangy Thai dressing

The two-time gold winner at the Australian Wagyu Association's branded beef competition quickly grew to become a top choice for some of the island's top restaurants, such as **Candlenut**, **Salt Grill & Sky Bar**, **Esquina** and **Salted & Hung**. It has even found a place on the menu of Argentinian restaurant **Bochinche**, led by Buenos Aires native Diego Jacquet and head chef Fabrice Mergalet.

These are also some of the restaurants that are participating in the brand's month-long promotion this November, dubbed A Cut of Freedom, where each are featuring creations that showcase the Westholme wagyu's depth of flavour. Of course, there are preferred cuts among the chefs at the helm. "We have always used the tri-tip on the menu, because it's one of my favourite cuts," shares Salted & Hung head chef Drew Nocente, who remains particularly enamoured with this uncommon but versatile cut that he affirms is tender and full of flavour.

For the restaurant's featured dish, dubbed simply Westholme and Carrots, the team skillfully demonstrates how to cook the tri-tip in a jasper oven, rendering a good char on the outside, while showing off the beautiful marbling when guests cut into it, he adds.



Salted & Hung head chef Drew Nocente loves the tri-tip's uniquely versatile and flavourful qualities

Also a fan of the less popular cut is Esquina's head chef Carlos Montobbio who feels the oyster blade is also an unexpectedly tender and tasty cut. When braised, he explains, the thin layer of "silver skin" in the middle turns gelatinous, adding texture to this unique cut, which he chooses to serve thinly sliced. "I wanted to create a braised dish that does not look braised," he tells. "I cook it at only 58 degrees C, so that the meat remains a beautiful pink colour, and retains all the consistent, rich marbling that is signature of Westholme beef.

The navel end brisket is another beautiful cut that screams flavour, says Victor Loy, executive chef of Plentyfull, who wanted to bring out the best eating quality of the cut in his dish of smoked Westholme Navel End Brisket MBS3-5, which he uses to make pastrami that he serves in a brioche bun with pickled jalapeño and smoked cheddar. "Even the flavour of the (beef) fat is not wasted, because we use it fry the chips that are served on the side," he continues.



Candlenut's intercostal rib rendang topped with beef floss

Interestingly, it is **Malcolm Lee's** showcase of the brand's intercostal rib that boasts the biggest surprise. The chef-owner of Candlenut Kitchen feels the cut's depth of flavour is the ideal complement to the complex flavours of Peranakan cooking. "Guests are used to more regular cuts like the tenderloin or sirloin," Lee expounds. "So in order to encourage them to try the cut we selected, we decided to showcase the intercostal rib in a rendang, finished with beef serunding (floss) and turmeric leaf. "The Westholme cut not only carries the flavour of the spices well, but holds its own in the dish, in terms of taste and texture," he affirms. Thankfully, it is lush and boldly flavourful dishes like these that will no doubt stay a well-loved staple on the menu, long after the promotion ends.