

Heritage Meats offer Customers chance to Meet Them on the Farm

The award winning Heritage Meats, based at the National Trust owned Yew Tree Farm in Cumbria, is taking the bold step of throwing open its gates, with everyone welcome to come and see first-hand the farm's production methods.

A major issue consumer's face today is the confusion over food jargon and tricky terminology, which seems to be designed to keep the public in the dark and disguise poor or cheap food production methods. 'The meet the meat producers' tour is designed to help the customer make an informed choice and see for themselves why it is worth being a choosy foodie. Visitors will also have the opportunity to talk to key members of the farm about the rearing, slaughtering and butchering methods.

Heritage Meats based at the National Trust owned Yew Tree Farm in Cumbria produces meat by rearing animals in a way that is as close to the natural lifestyle of the animal as possible. The Herdwick Hogget¹ is slaughtered when over a year old allowing animals a longer natural life which produces better quality, more marbled meat. The marbling improves flavour and 'juiciness'. The Belted Galloway beef animals are also matured slowly.

All of the meat is hung for the optimum time (lamb seven days and beef 21 days), then butchered and presented with extreme care.

This method of meat production protects and maintains the stunning scenery and the animals have a stress free life. The consumer enjoys the amazing benefits of meat from animals with a 'wild' diet.

Herdwick sheep meat was put to the test by Bristol University. Lab technicians analysed the meat against other animal fats and found it to be higher in unsaturated fat than any other breed. When cooked, this means that the juices dissolve into gravy and do not have the waxy feel on the tongue that some cooked lamb has. It also has the benefit of containing essential omega fats, which are often deficient in our modern diets. The animals' diet of heather, berries and mixed leaves ensures the meat has a completely unique and truly delicious flavour.

Caroline Watson, Yew Tree Farm tenant (along with husband Jon), said: “I am fed up of the ever increasingly difficult and confusing information that is being circulated about meat. Why can’t producers just be clear about the way the animals are reared, handled, slaughtered and processed? Then the customer can make an informed decision about how much they are willing to pay for each different method.

“We think the modern consumer needs help. Customers want to know the truth without being intimidated. We provide a real person to talk to, someone who is happy to help, no matter how much you do or don’t know about farming or meat.

“Our free range livestock are extensively reared with minimal use of artificial chemicals and veterinary medicines. The welfare of our livestock is independently monitored by the RSPCA Freedom Food scheme. Our animals are predominantly grass fed and all our supplementary feed, needed during the winter is UK sourced. But how is a consumer supposed to know all this? This is simply too much information for a label.

“People are becoming more aware of good food choices when shopping for food directly, but what about when eating out or buying a prepared meal? Heritage Meats supply the Michelin starred and highly acclaimed Sharrow Bay Country House Hotel and several other Lakeland gems². These premier Lakeland dining venues can assure customers that they only buy the best even in tough times. In addition, they can now offer their valued clientele the chance to visit the farm where their beef is grazed and their lamb roams free on the fells.”

Jon Watson, Yew Tree Farm tenant, said: “We are very proud to be working with some of the best chefs in the country. We continue to satisfy their exacting standards and consistently provide the very highest quality meat.”

Caroline, continued: “We will answer any uncomfortable questions about any aspect of our meat production methods and enlighten visitors with good tips for finding fine meat.”

To book a tour of Yew Tree Farm, please contact Caroline Watson on 01539 441433 or e-mail info@yewtree-farm.com