COOKING PASSION SINCE 1877

Grass fed vs. Grain fed beef explained

What's the difference and how does it affect the quality and taste?

When it comes to beef, there's one question we all want answered... Grass-fed or Grain-fed? In Australia, the type of feed is usually displayed on the label, but for many of us there's still a big question mark as to how this affects the quality and taste of meat and which one we should choose.

So we've decided to settle the score once and for all and give you the facts on Grass fed vs. Grain fed beef so you can make up your own mind!

Grass-fed beef:

Around 97% of Australian cattle are raised on natural pastures and are considered grass fed. While grass makes up the the majority of the animal's feed, they may also be fed grain to supplement their diet when pastures are poor. Different breeds of cattle along with changes in the seasons can influence the style and quality of beef produced as a result of being 100% grass fed.

Meat colour:
You can often pick when beef is grass-fed by the slight yellow hue of the fat. This is a result of the pigments in grass and does not effect on the quality of the beef.

Flavour:
For many consumers, grass-fed is said to have a more complex flavour as a result of the varied pastoral diet.

Grain-fed beef:

To be classified as Grain-fed, cattle must be fed a grain based diet for over 60 days. At the last count, grain fed beef made up around 3% of total cattle in Australia with many farmers choosing to raise their cattle on a grass-based diet before finishing the cattle on a grain-based diet. Grain in the cattle diet can include wheat, barley or sorghum.

Meat colour:
Beef from grain-fed cattle have brighter, whiter fat with more marbling throughout due to the the higher sugar and fat content of the grains.

Flavour:
Because of the increase in intramuscular fats, Grain-fed beed is said to have a more buttery flavour.

So when it comes to choosing between the two, it's simply a case of personal preference. If you like your meat to have more marbling then

you're more likely to enjoy the flavour of Grain-fed beef, but if you like the idea of cattle raised on natural pastures, then Grass-fed is for you. If you like both, it's a win win! You'll enjoy your beef no matter what you choose!

Whatever your preference, just remember to buy Australian so you can be sure of the providence and quality of the meat you eat!

Source: Meat and Livestock Australia.

For more beef tips and techniques visit:

- Different cuts of beef and how to cook them
- Secrets to the perfect roast beef
- The rise of Wagyu beef

For popular beef recipes try:

- Veal osso buco recipe
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