

# A cut apart

As shows like Masterchef and Top Chef take over prime time television, us urban Bangladeshis have acquainted ourselves with words such as rib-eye, chuck etc. Our traditional butchers do not usually maintain any certain cuts of meat, and that is the way it has been for ages. So we, having learnt from our parents and traditions, did not realise the various ways of cooking different parts of the beef, except more recently.

Now, for the beef enthusiasts, the bad news is, you will be hard pressed to find a butcher who is an expert at preparing standard cuts of meat too easily, if at all.

The good news here is that you can yourself direct the cutting and participate in the process, and hence get the desired cuts, but you must first teach yourself about what you want specifically.

## FOR SLOW COOKING, CURRIES, POT ROAST

### Chuck

While we do not have a specific guideline for cuts we generally use for our curries

such as 'bhuna', 'rezala', 'mejhani beef' etc. it is suggested that as we simmer them over a long period of time using meat from the shoulder region, the chuck. As it is tough and has a lot of fat it retains tenderness and enhances the flavor even when cooked for long.

### Beef short ribs

Meanwhile we also have what is called the beef short ribs, near the 'plate' described below, which when braised, the cooking method our home kitchens are more familiar with, creates a gelatinous broth, excellent when paired with bread or 'ruti'. In Sylhet for example, it is a tradition to have breakfast on the second day with the previous day's beef curry or a fresh batch paired with ruti prepared using rice flour.

### Brisket

Another cut of meat similar to the chuck, also tough and fairly fatty, it is the meat taken from the breastbone, the brisket. When cooked on a low heat for a long time, the meat will fall apart at the touch of a spoon. This piece is also ideal for all those barbeques we have planned with friends

and family, and, cooked slowly on the heat, the aroma will whet the guests' appetites as they catch up with each other.

### Shank

The beef shank comes from the legs. Again, this takes very long to cook, and so it is ideal to slow cook it on medium or low heat, in order to break the connective tissues.

## FOR THE VARIOUS STEAKS

### Ribs and short loin

The most tender cuts of meat include the ribs, and the short loin, which begins at the end of the ribs. This is a premium cut given that this is where we get the porterhouse steaks and t-bone steaks from, given that the tenderloin is not separated.

The beef ribs are where you can source the rib-eye steak. This meat is tender, so keep in mind it does not require as long to cook, and overcooking can take away its moistness and make it chewy instead.

### Plate

As for the beef plate, situated right beneath the ribs near the belly, it contains the diaphragm muscle which while being flavourful

is also a very thin layer of meat so needs to be cooked very quickly over intense flame.

### Sirloin and tenderloin

If the beef sirloin and tenderloin are to be handled separately, the former can be used for grilling or barbecuing depending whether it is the top or bottom sirloin, the bottom sirloin being slightly tougher because it is closer to the legs, while the tenderloin itself is quite tender and can only be cooked using the dry heat cooking method.

### Flank

The beef flank, which is near the belly, in line with the brisket and plate, is where we have the flank steak. This meat is slightly tough but as long as it is not overcooked it will have wonderful texture and flavour.

### Round

The beef round, which is the rear end of a cow, is quite as tough but not as fatty as the chuck, thus, the best cooking method for this cut is to roast it so that it tenderises without losing all its flavour which come from the fatty tissue.

By Ayesha Rahman Chowdhury

# The hunt for the right spice

In this day and age, just about all the spices you need to cook up a storm are pre-packed as powders, in the form of a paste or freeze dried. What's there to even hunt? You can even get pre-mixes delivered to your door steps. All that is left is to cook up a meaty bonanza this Eid!

However, if only a cook's work was so easy! Pre-packaged powder spices are only good for daily meals — that's what all hardened cooks will say. All culinary activities are halted without the treasured spices. Not one 'hari' will touch fire unless the turmeric, the cinnamon, the ginger and the garlic paste, and the rest of the masala blends are ready and set out.

## STARTING THE HUNT — GOING OLD SCHOOL WITH DHAKA NEW MARKET

There is no wrong way of getting to Dhaka

New Market, especially the bazaar. What will come as a slight challenge is getting to the spice section. For the first timer, it's best to go with a seasoned trekker for a feel of the back-roads.

While the spice markets of Marrakesh, Morocco are famed to spread the aroma over a mile, New Market's spice market substitutes with a unique ambience. Cinnamons are stacked inside wooden boxes, turmeric and chillies are being ground as ordered, or if you are in a hurry you can pick-up an already packed one.

Essentials like cloves, cardamoms from the cardamom capital – Guatemala, black and white peppers, chunks of asafoetida (heeng), mace and nutmeg, are all stocked in opaque plastic jars. Nothing is left out, from cumin to fennel to fenugreek to mod-

ern additions like imported paprika and pre-ordered star anise, nothing is amiss. Stores even boast their own special mix for 'panchforon' or garam masala.

As for prices, there is room for haggling. But the sellers can sniff out the newbie even before he or she sets a foot inside the store. It will take a few trips, some cooking ups and downs to finally be set on the right path.

## FOR THE "I'M COOKING UP SOMETHING MEDITERRANEAN/ EUROPEAN THIS QURBANI"

Those seeking Ras el Hanout or marinades for 'honey roasted beef' may find themselves in a fix for their experiments. Dried thyme, rosemary powder or Turkish allspice is not common.

Retail chains like Shwapno, Meena Bazar, Agora, to name the most known, have taken

over this bit in style. Picky buyers can inspect their cloves right down to the stalk and pick every individual pepper corn before buying in these stores.

Inaugurated this year, Gourmet Bazar is already a sensation in providing the best of condiments and spices from around the culinary world. Too traffic-logged to buy even the essentials? With the facility for home delivery, Direct Fresh is bringing the full hunt home without skimping on quality.

Whether it's Japanese Shichimi Togarashi or 'American dry rub' or newly rediscovered family recipe, any and all spice mixes can now be made within the confines of the city. Happy cooking to all this Eid!

By Iris Farina

সবার জন্য  
প্রাণ ইউ এইচ টি  
দুধ

প্রাণ ডেইরী হাব : চুক্তিবদ্ধ কৃষকদের কাছ থেকে সংগ্রহ করে সর্বোৎকৃষ্ট মানের দুধ।  
ইউএইচটি পদ্ধতি : ১৪০ ডিগ্রী সেলসিয়াস তাপমাত্রায় সর্বকমের জীবাণু ধ্বংস করে ক্যালসিয়াম, মিনারেলসহ সকল পুষ্টিগুণ অক্ষুণ্ণ রাখে।  
টেট্রাপ্যাক : ৬ টি স্তর দুধকে বাইরের আলো-বাতাস ও জলীয় বাষ্পের সংস্পর্শে আসতে দেয় না, তাই ফ্রিজ ছাড়াই দীর্ঘদিন সংরক্ষণ করা যায়।