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Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's veal recipes

The plight of continental veal calves is enough to turn anyone's stomach, but not all veal is raised inhumanely. Buy British rose veal and you can enjoy this splendid meat with a clear conscience



Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall
The Guardian, Friday 20 May 2011
[Article history](#)



Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's slow-cooked veal shoulder: A great, easy Sunday lunch. Photograph: Colin Campbell for the Guardian

Few things raise the hackles of thoughtful eaters quite like veal – unless it's veal with a side order of foie gras. Bleak images of calves in cramped crates or being herded on to lorries linger in the memory. And they should – as a reminder of the worst excesses of indifference to animal welfare, they take some beating. But today I'm unashamedly putting on my rose-tinted spectacles and flying the flag for British rose veal. To be honest, if you drink milk or eat cheese, it's crueller not to eat it.

Spare a thought for male dairy calves. Over a quarter of a million of them are killed each year. Unable to produce milk (obviously) and unsuitable for beef production, they are shot soon after birth as a "waste product" of the dairy industry. Either that or they're exported to Europe, where the continental craving for pale meat means their welfare is profoundly compromised.

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In the past few years, there's been a growing interest in high-welfare rose veal in this country, and I for one am glad of it. Calves live in small groups, with deep straw bedding and access to a varied diet that leads to their distinctive pink meat; in free-range or organic production, they're also given access to outdoor grazing. The animals are killed at around six months old, roughly the same age as most pigs or sheep slaughtered for pork and lamb.

Veal's most well-known outing is probably in the form of the classic Italian dish osso buco. The tender, slow-cooked meat and marrow of the shin are often enlivened with gremolata, that perky combination of garlic, fresh herbs and lemon zest that brings out the flavour and cuts through the richness of the meat.

In fact, this combination is a great addition to many veal dishes, from today's kebabs to veal burgers or meatballs (mixed in some minced pork to keep them succulent). Veal marries well with piquant flavours and rich, buttery, creamy sauces. It's very good in slowly simmered stews, and I also like it quickly cooked in the form of escalopes lightly dusted in seasoned flour and speedily fried. If I'm feeling extravagant, I'll lay some slices of prosciutto and sage leaves over the escalopes, attach them with cocktail sticks and fry, before deglazing the pan with marsala or white wine for a tasty saltimbocca.

So when you buy veal or order it in a restaurant, make sure it's British rose veal. Ask for it at the butcher's or farmers' market, look for it in Marks & Spencer and Waitrose, who stock it in some larger stores, or try [Bocaddon Farm](#), which produces welfare-friendly veal in Cornwall, or [Drumachloy Farm](#) on the Isle of Bute; both offer a mail-order service to most parts of the country.

Slow-cooked veal shoulder

Based on a [Marcella Hazan](#) recipe for the classic Italian way of cooking a rolled shoulder, this makes a great, easy Sunday lunch with potatoes and wilted greens. Serves six.

- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 sprig rosemary, leaves picked and finely chopped
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1.2kg boned shoulder of rose veal
- 1 knob butter
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 240ml white wine
- 12 small shallots, unpeeled
- 50ml double cream
- 1 handful parsley leaves, chopped

In a bowl, mix the garlic, rosemary and lemon zest, and season. Unroll the shoulder (if rolled) and spread the inside with the herby mixture. Roll it back up, tie with kitchen string in three places and season.

In a heavy-bottomed casserole, melt the butter and olive oil over a medium-high heat and brown the meat on all sides. Remove the veal and deglaze the pan with the wine, scraping up any brown bits, then add about 150ml water. Return the meat to the pan, placing the shallots around it. Turn down the heat so the wine is barely simmering and cook very gently, partially covered, for an hour and a half to two hours, turning from time to time, until the meat feels very tender when prodded with a fork. Keep an eye on it and add a splash of water if it begins to look dry.

Lift out the meat and shallots. Squeeze the shallots out of their skins, chop roughly and return to the pot. Bring to a simmer and reduce to thicken. Add the cream, season and simmer for a minute or two. Remove from the heat and stir in the parsley. Serve the veal cut into thick slices with sauce spooned over the top.

ingredient, too
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Veal chops with lemon and capers

This makes an easy, tasty lunch served with a crisp, green salad and some crusty bread to mop up the juices. Serves four.

4 tbsp olive oil
Juice and finely grated zest of 1 lemon
2 tbsp finely chopped thyme leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 rose veal chops
6 unpeeled garlic cloves, bashed
2 bay leaves
150ml white wine
1½ tbsp capers, rinsed
3 tbsp double cream or crème fraîche

In an ovenproof dish large enough to hold all the chops in a single layer, whisk together three tablespoons of olive oil, the lemon zest, half the lemon juice, the thyme and a few grinds of black pepper. Add the chops, garlic and bay, and turn over in the marinade. Cover and leave to marinate for a couple of hours.

Heat the oven to 220C/425F/gas mark 7. Lift the chops from the dish (reserve the marinade), pat dry on kitchen paper and warm the remaining oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat. Season the chops and fry on both sides for a minute or two, until browned, then place them back in the marinade dish. Deglaze the pan with the wine, scraping up any browned bits, and pour the wine from the pan and the remaining lemon juice into the oven dish. Give everything a stir and cook, uncovered, in the oven for 20 minutes, basting halfway through.

Place the chops on a warm plate. Put the oven dish on the hob (if it's not suitable for the stove top, tip the juices into a small pan) over medium-low heat, stir in the capers and cream, adjust the seasoning and simmer gently for a minute or two. Spoon sauce over the chops and serve.

Veal kebabs

Veal is great on the barbecue, especially when tenderised for a few hours beforehand in a yoghurt marinade. Serves six to eight.

For the kebabs
1kg rose veal topside, trimmed of sinew and chopped into roughly 4cm cubes
50ml olive oil (plus a little more for brushing the potatoes)
50ml rapeseed oil
6 tbsp whole-milk yoghurt
4 tbsp finely chopped mint
2 tbsp finely chopped oregano
2 tbsp finely chopped parsley
2 fat garlic cloves, minced
Finely grated zest of 1 small orange
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
Juice of ½ lemon
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
About 400g new potatoes
Salt
A handful of bay leaves (optional)

For the dressing
1 handful oregano leaves, finely chopped
1 small bunch chives, finely chopped
About 1 tbsp finely chopped thyme leaves
Juice and finely grated zest of 1 lemon



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Olive or rapeseed oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

To make the marinade, whisk together the oils and yoghurt, then stir in the herbs, garlic, orange and lemon zest, lemon juice and pepper. Add the meat and marinate for four to six hours.

While the meat marinates, soak six to eight wooden skewers in cold water (this stops them burning on the barbecue). Boil the potatoes in plenty of salted water until just tender, drain and set aside. Next, make the dressing. Combine the herbs and lemon zest in a bowl. Measure the lemon juice, then add it, too. Add three times as much oil as you have lemon juice, and season well with salt and pepper.



Thread the marinated meat on to the skewers, alternating a piece of meat with a new potato and a bay leaf, if you are using them. Brush the potatoes with oil, then lay the skewers on a hot barbecue (or very hot ridged griddle pan) and cook, turning regularly and seasoning from time to time with a pinch of salt, for six to eight minutes, or until cooked through. Trickle a little of the herb dressing over the kebabs. Sprinkle with sumac, if you like, and serve with flatbreads or pittas, a green salad, lemon wedges and the remaining dressing in a small jug.

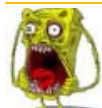
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 Staff
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pogmotoin
 21 May 2011 12:50AM

Hugh you really are a cool guy (dude) but I really want to eat a baby cow. Help me with a blood curling recipe.

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noodlesticks
 21 May 2011 07:59AM

Veal, properly farmed as you say, is a very versatile meat. My favourite is *ossi bucci*, but a nice simple dish, *Étuvée de veau*, is from the Chamberlains' 1950s book, *The*

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Flavour of France (and can be adapted for pork as well, if you have ethical problems). It is simple [stew](#) with red wine. Lovely.



Sparebulb

21 May 2011 09:14AM

I don't have a problem with veal (British) on ethical grounds, I just don't think it's all that special and so won't pay the premium.

For me it's like such things as frog legs or snails that carry a premium despite there being acceptable substitutes at a better price.

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gentlemancook

21 May 2011 10:33AM

I couldn't agree more with HFW, not only is it acceptable to eat veal, but we really should be doing more of it, as I argued in a [post on my blog](#) a while back that's so close in it's argument I wonder if he's not been cribbing...

On the other hand, Sparebulb also has a point - I've often come across veal that's bland to the point of pointlessness, but generally, the pinker it is the more flavoursome, as well as more ethical

You could try [flank or skirt](#), [seared and served rare and sliced](#) as a deliciously delicate and tender alternative to a regular beef steak

Or a single [rib](#), [pan seared then briefly roasted](#), makes a perfect 'light' Sunday roast for two

And in both cases, because flank & skirt are cheap cuts, and because with the rib you simply have less than a regular joint, veal is not a pricey option.

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sparclear

21 May 2011 01:02PM

Eat less meat altogether, full stop.

Raising cattle for whatever purpose is greedy on land use, seven times as many people can dine from land that's used to grow vegetarian foods.

Cattle farmers are currently campaigning to kill badgers rather than changing to outdoor rearing for most of the year. Cramping the quick-fat breeds into airless barns all winter, releasing them onto monoculture pasture in summer, and shunting them all around the country weakened herds to TB, not the 10% or so of *all kinds of* wildlife carrying & developing its own immunity long term.

Vets know this and yet are not raising their voices to promote sound welfare in the 'industry'.

Furthermore the pressure on rainforest to convert to providing palm oil and soya beans almost entirely for animal food links directly to devastating, possibly irreversible climate change. Even organic and SA certified animal foods aren't squeaky-clean as to their provenance. Also the GM movement has its fingers well into that tacky pie.

Hugh, you know this, so get cracking old chap, harmless beef is an oxymoron.

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Toadjuggler

21 May 2011 05:38PM

I believe that anyone who drinks milk has a moral duty to eat veal. I would like to be able to buy it at a reasonable price, it shouldn't be a luxury product: it certainly never used to be.

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SamM84

21 May 2011 05:58PM

Sorry gentlemancook but Hugh made that argument on one his programmes quite a

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long time ago!

I don't like veal enough to pay the premium I'm afraid, I do when I'm in Italy though. (Which is bad of me I know)



Emma261082

21 May 2011 06:13PM

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For those who are saying that eating veal involves paying a premium it might be worth trying your local waitrose if you've got one. Mine finds it so difficult to shift veal that the stuff is usually reduced to way below the alternatives.



NatashaGSKinner

21 May 2011 06:15PM

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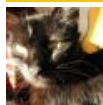
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I was never brought up eating veal - it was considered cruel, and when I was in my early twenties was horrified when a posh older friend of mine ordered it in a restaurant! Now I have recently tried the British Rose veal and find it very tasty - not as tasty as beef for sure, but a tasty alternative to chicken for sure.

I live in Shropshire and have been seeing more of this at farmers markets and in butchers, it seems to be reasonably affordable (certainly when compared to free-range chicken). I will be eating more of it this summer!



kizbot

21 May 2011 06:17PM

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What's the alternatives to snails?



gentlemancook

21 May 2011 08:16PM

Recommend (2)

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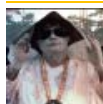
@ SamM84

I was joking, I didn't really think he'd been cribbing. It's just that we're coming from the same place on this, as many other meat related issues, and indeed I regularly reference HFW as a source on my blog - in fact I'm rather surprised to see that I hadn't done so even in passing on the Veal post.

@ Sparclear

To be fair to HFW he is a regular advocate of eating less meat; indeed one of the key points of the whole nose-to-tail movement, of which he's a leading proponent, is to make more use of fewer slaughtered animals, by making good use of those bits that so many modern meat eaters disdain. More fool them, because they're missing the [best bits](#)

And my experience tallies with Emma261082's - I often find reduced to clear bargains on veal on the Waitrose meat counter - along with their bargain bags of yummy [pigs cheeks](#)...



unRanked

21 May 2011 09:33PM

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there is no need to make a hue and cry over this...



arkadydarrell

21 May 2011 10:05PM

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@ Sparclear, In the case of veal surely you mean we should be drinking less milk? Less milk production = fewer calves needing to be produced by the dairy industry. At

least the dairy industry now has the option of sex-weighted sperm though, so fewer male calves are produced in the first place.

I'm glad for the tips on where to buy it, I've never found it on sale in this country personally (I only go to M&S and Waitrose for occasional luxury items and don't normally bother checking the meat sections, plus the Waitrose is a tiny city-centre one). My meat consumption is low however (flavouring rather than the main attraction, and cheap cuts), so still may not buy it any time soon.



Donkeywife

21 May 2011 11:22PM

Hugh, I was going to write that you're such a cruel meat eating carnivore, but you already know that.

You eat far too much meat. I suggest you start eating more vegetables, it might do you some good.

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panpies

22 May 2011 12:05AM

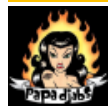
as my butcher says, the problem with rose veal is that it's not veal, it's just immature beef. And if you're going to have beef you may as well have something tasty. For wiener schnitzel, on the other hand, if it's not proper veal, i'd rather have pork or chicken before the rose variety (result: minute steak in breadcrumbs)

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papadjabs

22 May 2011 08:07AM

Vittello Tonnato is worth a mention, classic Italian fillet of veal with tuna sauce.

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thierryt1

22 May 2011 07:29PM

Britain has lost contact with the reality of food production. Veal used to be common as did horse meat. Animals who served no purpose. When the Vestey family took over nearly the whole of british butchery all the traditions were destroyed. Butchers no longer had a whole carcasse but parts .The people who ran Vestey's shops were just sales people and not butchers Young beef , young pigs etc were sent for making cheap food.. Mutton disappeared . The high street outside London still follows the Vestey pattern. Centrally butchered .The Vestey's have a lot to answer for.

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Sparebulb

22 May 2011 09:55PM

What's the alternatives to snails ?

Button mushrooms, they are interchangeable with snails in recipes- frog's legs is chicken wings.

If you filter out snobbery then you'll know that, as indeed do the vast majority of consumers as that's what they buy in preference to snails and frog legs- if it was different then supermarkets would be on to it.

The same with veal, I won't pay a premium for what is a by-product of the dairy industry- I'll happily eat it but won't pay a premium. If it was priced against good quality British pork then I'd consider it as a substitute.

I base my purchasing philosophy on common sense- if something is a 'premium product' then it actually has to be a premium product, not just premium because of the way the market attempts to price it.

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cityroadcook
22 May 2011 10:54PM

Try veal escalope. You only need a small amount as it is flattened out, so it works out to be good value. I cook it briefly in Marsala wine which I then reduce and add butter and thyme to make a sauce, simple, quick and delicious.

Recommend (1)

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maffpew
23 May 2011 06:17AM

@ [sparclear](#)

how self righteous of you.

Recommend (0)

Responses (0)

Report

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wayzegoose
23 May 2011 08:46AM

The same is also true of kid, for anyone who eats goats milk or cheese...

Recommend (0)

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SandraQS
23 May 2011 05:31PM

"Rose veal" is certainly not "humane". Calves killed to make rose veal still suffer terrifying and premature deaths at slaughter, where they may be hung upside down and have their throats slit, often while they're still conscious. Their mothers also suffer when their calves are taken from them, often within 48 hours of birth. It is not uncommon for cows to call and search frantically for their calves for days or even months after they have been taken away and sold to veal farms. There is nothing humane about putting these thinking, feeling animals through all this distress just for a taste of veal.

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SorayaAslam
23 May 2011 06:30PM



@SandraQS - I totally agree with you. A poor helpless animal cruelly ripped away from its mum, petrified and screaming and then barbarically slaughtered, all for 30 minutes taste on one's palate. How about some nice cruelty free recipies Hugh?

Recommend (0)

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gentlemancook
23 May 2011 07:29PM

@ Sandra & Soraya

But that will happen anyway, whether any of us eat veal or not - on this issue your beef (sorry!) should be with the dairy industry, not veal eaters.

The point about rose veal is the difference in the treatment afforded the calves between being removed from their mothers (which, I stress again, will happen anyway - that's how we get milk - so it's not just for the taste of veal) and being slaughtered for their meat (no earlier in their lives than lambs or pigs routinely are for theirs)

Unlike some meat eaters I totally respect vegetarians for their choice not to eat meat, but if your objection to veal is an animal welfare issue, you really need to be vegan, not just vegetarian (which, of course, S&S, you may well be...)

I've written about this in greater depth on my [blog](#)

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