

The Meat Master

In the carnivorous world of steak, one stands above them all: José Gordón's buey. Giselle Whiteaker samples the finest meat in all the land at The World's End Market.



"Everything started when I felt the link between this specific animal and myself. It's not an animal like any other," says José Gordón of his decision to rear a collection of local, and often rare, ox on his family's farm. There's passion in his voice as he speaks about his journey to producing what is billed as a meat unlike any other. Indeed, *Time Magazine* called it "the perfect steak" and *The Guardian* featured José's restaurant, El Capricho, situated in the hills of Jiménez de Jamuz in Spain, as the best place to eat steak in the world.

Many years ago, in Galicia, José found a farmer with a unique animal that was treated like it was part of the family. "I realised there was magic here in his dedication to the animal," explains José, "...and I wanted to have the same."

Now, José spends around a third of each year searching somewhat obsessively for the right animals, selecting individual animals from breeds with a long line. He chooses mature animals who have worked in the open fields, and brings each ox to his organic farm, letting them roam his fields for up to 15 years. The resulting meat – known as *buey* in Spain – is a revelation.

After slaughter, the meat is hung to cure in an air-conditioned cave hollowed out of the hills just behind the restaurant for up to 90 days, although José also experiments with longer periods. The process is designed to intensify the flavours. And intense they are – rich and succulent in every format, and well-deserving of the praise awarded by those in the know.

In a piece of news sure to delight British carnivores, The World's End Market in Chelsea has forged a collaboration with this master of meat, becoming the first restaurant in the UK to serve "the finest meat on Earth." The World's End Market, located in the Grade 2-listed building that formerly housed the World's End Pub, is an innovative culinary concept that focuses on healthy, fresh and flavoursome food. Co-owner and chef, Sergey Men, himself a gastronomic expert, shares José's philosophy, so the collaboration represents an ideal match. Sitting alongside high-quality British-sourced meats and seafood are eight dishes featuring José's *buey*, ranging from an El Capricho burger made from premium ox to Solomillo de Buey, premium ox fillet steak.

Naturally, I couldn't resist sampling the menu and meeting the man behind the meat at the launch of the new menu. The tasting menu opened with *Cecina de Buey*, delicate strips of premium cured ox leg. The pink marbled slices may deter those who like their steak well done, but the tender slivers are so soft that they melt in the mouth, leaving a buttery, rich flavour on the tongue.

My taste-buds are tingling in anticipation of the second dish, *Carpaccio* from the *Entrecote*, matured for 180 days in the finest Spanish olive oil. The generous slice is much darker in colour, with far less fat, yet it gently pulls apart with a fork and dissolves on the tongue.

The third taster is *Steak Tartare*, the disc of raw premium ox paired with deliciously crusty bread. The presentation is simple and unpretentious, which lets the flavours speak for themselves. And speak they do. It may be the wine talking, but with just a dash of imagination, the delicate tartare speaks of free-roaming in the fields and contentment; a life well-lived.

The fourth dish to be presented is *Vacio de Buey*, premium ox flank steak served with charcoal-grilled Spanish red peppers. Simply prepared, the steak slices are served with small pieces of the grilled fat, the outside of the meat lightly blackened, the centre a vibrant pink. While some may balk at the thought of eating fat in this skinny, no-carb, low-fat, unsalted



world, paired with the meat it intensifies the flavours, pushing it into another realm.

I'm not convinced this can be topped, until José serves the piece-de-resistance, the *Chuleta de Buey*. Despite devouring four plates of meat, the premium ox, bone-in, rib eye steak, matured for 90 days, is irresistible. Remember the satisfaction you felt last time you consumed a really good steak, multiply it by ten, and that's *Chuleta de Buey*. It's the kind of steak that you eat as slowly as possible, purely so that you can revel in the exquisite flavours.



There's just one problem – once you've sampled José Gordón's *buey*, an ordinary steak will never quite taste the same. There's no going back when you've had the

best. The good news is that you don't have to travel to the end of the world to find it – just to The World's End Market.

For more information about The World's End Market, see www.theworldsendmarket.com



Four more fabulous steaks

Hawksmoor Spitalfields

This Spitalfields steakhouse has wooed much of London since opening in 2006, and for good reason. Hawksmoor supplies excellent produce, cooked well, focusing on top-quality beef from renowned London butcher, Ginger Pig. There's an impressive list of breeds: Longhorn is always available, and guest breeds range from Herefords to Lincoln Reds. Steaks are seared to perfection on Josper charcoal grills, like this grass-fed, bone-in prime rib.

www.thehawksmoor.com



The Caxton Grill

The stylish Caxton Grill, in the heart of Westminster, offers an inspired menu, made using the finest local ingredients, including fruits, vegetables and herbs from its own working Roof Kitchen Garden and honey from the resident 350,000 Buckfast honey bees. Executive Head Chef Alexander Boyd works closely with local suppliers to bring the best dry-aged British beef steaks to the restaurant, like this 42-day aged rib of beef on the bone, cooked on the restaurant's Josper Grill to add that hint of smokiness.

www.caxtongrill.co.uk



Lurra

Lurra in Marylebone takes its influence from *erretegia*, the traditional charcoal and wood grills found all over the Basque Country. This is a culinary tradition that enhances flavours and aromas and respects the virtues of the authentic, natural and well-sourced produce. The highlight is the 14-year Rubia Gallega "Galician Blond" Prime Rib, hung for 67 days, with the smallest cut of 900 grams being designed for sharing.

www.lurra.co.uk



M Victoria Street

M Grill at M Victoria Street sources the finest meat cuts from six selected countries – Australia, South Africa, Argentina, France, Italy and the USA – including the highly prized Blackmore Wagyu from Australia. Butchers and chefs are on hand during every service to offer beef master classes and allow diners the opportunity to have steaks cut to size and preference. Think big, juicy and delectable.

www.mrestaurants.co.uk