

## Veal back on the menu, minus the guilt

Veal has long been associated with animal cruelty, but the British version of this delicious meat is in fact a more ethical choice.

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It's Veal Wars on The Archers. For those of you who don't share my Radio 4 habit, a quick synopsis: Ed, the **dairy farmer** (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/recipes/4681475/The-way-forward-for-our-dairy-industry.html>), is being badgered by irritating Vicky to rear his calves for veal, and while she tries to find a market for the meat, Tom, the **organic pig** (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/recipes/5939604/Finding-a-cure-for-pricey-pork.html>) entrepreneur, has stolen the march (and Vicky's idea) with his veal and ham pies.



Veal dishes: Summer Osso bucco; Veal chops with braised lettuce, peas and broad beans Photo: JOHN LAWRENCE

The thing is that Vicky, like the Roundheads in 1066 and All That, may be Revolting, but she is Right. In order to keep up milk production, cows have to calve regularly. The heifers can be reared for milkers, but the bull calves don't make good beef. In common with dairy farmers up and down the country, Ed has been forced to either slaughter his male calves shortly after birth or send them to the Continent, to be reared for veal in what are often welfare-unfriendly surroundings.

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British veal calves, raised to much higher welfare standards (endorsed by Compassion in World Farming) is the perfect answer, if only we can be persuaded that it's not cruel, but delicious and guilt-free.

The clue that the veal is well-raised (as all British veal is) is the colour. Unlike the white-beige colour of meat from animals whose diet is restricted to milk and whose movement is limited, it has a deeper pink tone, earning it the name Rose or Rosé Veal.

Darina Allen calls it baby beef, which is one way to get around the lingering doubts about veal. But it's misleading too. Veal has a flavour and texture all of its own, a tender deliciousness. It's closer to lean pork than beef, but with the advantage that it can safely be eaten while still a moist, rosy medium rare.

Escalopes, beaten as thin as a rasher of bacon, will cook through before the outside colours, so just pan fry them as briefly as possible, wrapped in prosciutto with a sage leaf tucked in for a classic saltimbocca. Other cuts, like the famous osso bucco (cut from the top of the leg), need long, slow braising to be at their best.

So welcome back, veal. I'll even put up with Vicky if it means putting this delicious meat back on the menu.

## BUYING VEAL

- Larger branches of Marks & Spencer and Waitrose stock British veal only, while Tesco have both British and imported veal.

## Mail order suppliers

- Well Hung Meat (0845 230 3131; [www.wellhungmeat.com](http://www.wellhungmeat.com) (<http://www.wellhungmeat.com>) ) Delicious organic veal from Devon. The £50 veal taster box is especially good value.
- [xanthe.clay@telegraph.co.uk](mailto:xanthe.clay@telegraph.co.uk) (<mailto:xanthe.clay@telegraph.co.uk>)
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