



A SHOPPER'S  
GUIDE TO

# BUYING BRITISH BEEF

**Inside:** helpful information on  
how to make the right choice

100g e  
5 052320 616279 5

100g e

5 052320 616279 5

# INTRODUCTION



*Jilly Greed (left) and  
Minette Batters*

As professional beef farmers we know what goes into producing the very best British beef. As mothers and shoppers ourselves we also know how challenging it can be to have to provide healthy and nutritious meals for our families, seven days a week.

Whereas independent butchers and farm shops provide a personal advice service and can help consumers decide what to buy, not everyone has the time to seek them out and most of us now buy our meat from supermarkets.

Convenient as it is, shopping in supermarkets can be confusing because there is a bewildering selection of meat products and a variety of information and product claims which compete for space on the packaging.



Our supermarkets are good at labelling most meat products with country of origin details, but often there is a lot of other information required to be on the pack which is more prominent.

Ladies in Beef are proud of the beef that we produce in Britain and we want to make sure that shoppers who want to buy British beef can do so easily, by recognising and understanding some of the different messages on labels.



This short Guide is designed to help you know what to look for. Our own best advice is to look for the Red Tractor logo (see back page).

We hope you find it useful and that you continue to buy – and enjoy! – British beef.

**Minette Batters & Jilly Greed**  
Founders, Ladies in Beef  
[www.ladiesinbeef.org.uk](http://www.ladiesinbeef.org.uk)



## EXISTING LABELLING LEGISLATION

Under British or EU legislation it is not compulsory to label most meat products with their country of origin, but retailers do have to follow a number of EU regulations. They are also obliged to abide by the UK's own Trade Descriptions Act and Food Safety Act.

For example, by EU law the origin of raw fresh beef sold in supermarkets does have to be marked on packaging though there is no stipulation about the size of the typeface and it can sometimes be easy for shoppers not to notice this information.

The EU law on beef origin labelling does not cover processed beef products, so ready meals containing beef, cooked beef products, and even raw beef steaks or joints with a sauce or herb crust, do not have to have the origin of the meat marked on the packaging.

**A general principle in all the relevant legislation is that the place of origin of the meat should be labelled "if the failure to do so might mislead the purchaser".**

Our national supermarket chains are good at putting the country of origin of the meat they sell on the pack (and all the major chains have signed up to the Government's guidelines on Best Practice for labelling meat).

Sometimes the meat's country of origin is stated more prominently when it is British and less so when it is imported. It is therefore still possible to think that you are buying British and inadvertently pick up the wrong pack.

This is especially true of processed beef products, such as pies and ready meals.

**See over for things to watch out for to help you make the right choice when shopping.**

# FOUR THINGS TO

## 1. THE EU HEALTH MARK

The "EU Health mark" is an oval-shaped symbol found on all meat and dairy products and is required by EU food safety laws. It identifies the processing plant which packed the product.

It contains the identification of the country where the packing plant is located, together with the unique code number of that packing plant. This allows for traceability in the event of any food safety issue and the need for a product recall or similar.

Most imported beef is packed for supermarkets in UK packing plants, so the "UK" identifier in the EU Health Mark will be present on any such imported beef.

**On its own the EU Health Mark does not indicate where the beef comes from, but it is required by law to indicate where the beef was packed.**

Nearly all the imported beef on supermarket shelves has an EU Health Mark containing a "UK" identifier, because it is packed in the UK.



# BE AWARE OF...

This Aberdeen Angus minced beef is not British. However, the Aberdeen Angus beef in the cottage pie below is British



Produced in the U.K., beef from the U.K., packed in the U.K.

There are many breeds of cattle, and under the right rearing conditions they can all produce wonderful-eating beef. Some of the most famous are indigenous British breeds such as Hereford or Aberdeen Angus.

But because some of our native breeding stock has been exported for more than a century, the UK is not the only place in the world which produces Hereford or Aberdeen Angus beef.

Lean British minced beef with sweet onions and finely grated carrots in a tasty, rich beef stock gravy, finished with a generous layer of buttery Mince Ripper mash.

**COOKING INSTRUCTIONS**

**To Oven Cook from chilled**

- Remove seal and trim.
- Place the container directly onto the middle shelf of a gas-broiled oven at 180°C/350°F. Use 180°C/350°F for 30 minutes.
- Check product is piping hot before serving.
- Do not re-heat.
- See how often you check cooking instructions in a guide only.

**INGREDIENTS**

Mashed Potatoes (D3), Potatoes (P0), Butter (H, 2), Cornmeal Salt, Cream, Sea Salt, Minced Beef, Bacon (P0), Aberdeen Angus Mince Beef (D3), Water, Cheese (P0), Carrots (D3), Beef Stock (3), Cheese, Potatoes, Parsnips, Carrots, Onions, Cornflour, Smoked Ham, Minced Beef, Sweetened Condensed Mushroom Stock, Mushroom Concentrate, Water, Salt, Sugar, Rapeseed Oil, Malt Flour (Free), Sea Salt, Worcester Sauce, Spirit Vinegar, White Black Treacle, Cheese, Salt, Tinned Liquid Concentrate, Garlic, Garlic Powder, Onion Salt, Yeast Extract (Liquid), Calcium Base Phosphate, Citric Acid, NO AFFIRMED COLOURS, FLAVOURS OR HYDROGENATED FAT.

**ALLERGY ADVICE**

- Contains gluten, milk and wheat

**As a guide we recommend the product contains:**

NUTRITION		
Typical values	Per 100g (as sold)	Per pack
Energy	1664 (664kcal)	39200 (3920kcal)
Protein	4.8g	252g
Carbohydrate	87g	394g
of which sugars	3.6g	55g
Fat	14g	134g
of which saturated	0.2g	4.2g
Fibre	1.9g	74g
Sodium	0.24g	6.94g
expressed as salt	0.66g	2.6g

**STORAGE**

Keep refrigerated. Suitable for freezing. Freeze on day of purchase and consume within one month. Defrost thoroughly before heating. Once defrosted, do not re-freeze.

**400g** (11.2oz)

**TRY ME LOVE ME**

Will refund and replace if you are not 100% happy please call 0800 950 000 or visit our website to stop orders www.asda.com

Produced in the U.K. Beef from the U.K., packed in the U.K. **Leeds U.K. S.A.D.**

**PACK INFO**

www.asda.com

**GREEN** CARD scheme recycled

**RECYCLED** PLASTIC LOCALLY FOR RECYCLED

**PLM** PLASTIC not currently recycled

For display units use by use date on pack

So be aware that mention of a native British breed on the pack does not necessarily mean that the meat in the pack has been produced in Britain. To guarantee this and be sure, look for the origin information.

# FOUR THINGS TO BE AWARE OF...



## 3. MULTIBUY DEALS

We all love a bargain, and like most foods in the supermarket beef is frequently sold on a promotional deal.

This may be a reduction in price such as “A Third Off”, or a lower price per kg, or a “MultiBuy” deal, such as 3 packs for £10, or 2 packs for £5. It can be easy to pick up two packs of, say, minced beef which

are being sold as part of such a deal, without realising that they may in fact not both be British.

All packs of fresh beef will be correctly labelled as either British or imported, but they can sometimes be stocked in the same chiller cabinet.

**So always pay extra attention to the labelling if you want to ensure that all the packs you buy are British.**



Often the origin of beef used in processed beef products is declared on the front of the pack



Cooked and packed in Ireland using Beef from the EU or South America



If in doubt check the origin information on the rear label

4. IMPORTED BEEF IN READY MEALS

A higher percentage of imported beef is used in processed products and ready meals than is sold as fresh beef. There is no legal obligation on supermarkets to include the origin of beef in ready meals.

However, retailers are advised by Government to provide a voluntary indication of origin where the meat is considered to be of interest to the shopper or if it is a main ingredient of the product.

Supermarkets generally label their ready meals very well, indicating the origin of the beef contained in them. There are many such products which use British beef and which clearly state this on the front of the label.

**If there does not appear to be any information on the front of the pack about the origin of the meat in a processed beef product or beef ready meal, the best advice is to look at the small print ingredients list on the back of the pack. You can usually find further detail there about where the beef comes from.**

# BEEF AND NUTRITION

Beef can play an important part in a healthy balanced diet as it contains a wide variety of essential nutrients including protein, key minerals and vitamins.

Many of the nutrients found in beef are known to be in short supply in the diets of some people.



*"Beef is a true nutritional power pack, providing a host of important vitamins and minerals for children and adults alike."*

**- Jilly Greed**



For comprehensive nutritional information  
visit [www.meatandhealth.com](http://www.meatandhealth.com)



## IRON

Iron is needed to carry oxygen in the blood and is essential for good health and physical wellbeing. Too little iron in the body can lead to iron deficiency known as anaemia, whose symptoms include tiredness, irritability and low attention span. In the UK almost 50% of women of child-bearing age have low iron intake.

## ZINC

Zinc helps make new cells and enzymes, it enables our bodies to process carbohydrate, fat and protein and it also helps with the healing of wounds and supporting the immune system.

## B VITAMINS

B Vitamins are essential for health, being important for the release of energy from food and also contributing to the health of the blood and the nervous system. Beef is an excellent source of a number of B vitamins, including B12 which is not found naturally in green plants and conventional vegetables. Vitamin B12 is required by rapidly dividing cells such as those in the bone marrow which form blood cells.

## OTHER MINERALS

Other minerals contained in beef include magnesium, copper, cobalt, phosphorus, chromium, nickel and selenium. All of these are needed for healthy body functions. For example selenium acts as an antioxidant whereas magnesium is needed for the functioning of a healthy nervous system.

# BEEF COOKING TIPS

Many of our supermarkets now include detailed cooking information on their packs of beef, but if in doubt here is a summary of our cooking tips. For more comprehensive information and for hundreds of great beef recipes visit [www.simplybeefandlamb.co.uk](http://www.simplybeefandlamb.co.uk)

## COOKING STYLE & TIMINGS

### Roasting

180-190°C, Gas Mark 4-5

Rare: 20 mins per 450g(1lb) + 20 mins

Medium: 25 mins per 450g(1lb) + 25 mins

Well Done: 30 mins per 450g(1lb) + 30 mins

### Pan Frying

*Fillet steaks:* Rare: 3-4 mins per side

Medium: 4-5 mins per side

Well Done: 6-7 mins per side

*Sirloin/Rump/Rib-eye steaks:*

Rare: 2-3 mins per side

Medium: 4 mins per side

Well Done: 6 mins per side

## HELPFUL TIPS

- Position the oven shelves so the meat is in the centre of the oven
- Allow the joint to rest for 10 mins before carving to let the meat fibres relax and the juices distribute evenly
- To ensure even cooking the secret is to cook joints in a moderate oven for slightly longer
- Use a heavy-based pan and only a small quantity of oil or butter
- Ensure that the oil is hot and sear each side to seal in the juices
- Only turn your steaks once for maximum juiciness
- If using a griddle rub a little oil on both sides of your steaks



---

### Stir-Frying

(for steaks cut to 1 cm thickness)

2-4 mins plus 2 mins with vegetables



- You only need a small amount of oil when stir-frying. Use a non-stick wok or pan
- Ensure the oil is hot; the meat should sizzle when added
- Cut the beef into 1cm thick strips across the grain to help tenderise the meat
- Add the hardest vegetables first and cook for 2 mins before adding the beef

---

### BBQ

For steaks, same timings as for pan-frying

For burgers, allow 4-6 minutes per side

- Light your barbecue well in advance and wait until the charcoal is glowing red before cooking
- Maintain correct food hygiene by keeping utensils, boards and plates for raw and cooked meat separate
- Ensure that burgers are cooked through before serving

---

### Grilling

*Fillet steaks:* Rare 3-4 mins per side

Medium 4-5 mins per side

Well Done 6-7 mins per side

*Sirloin/Rump/Rib-eye steaks:*

Rare 2-3 mins per side

Medium 4 mins per side

Well Done 6 mins per side

- Baste your meat with a prepared glaze, butter, oil or a marinade mixture to give a distinctive flavour
- Only turn your steaks once during cooking, leaving them to cook untouched will produce juicier results

---

### Pot-Roasting

(eg for silverside & brisket joints)

170-190°C, Gas mark 4-5

30-40 mins per 450g(1lb) + 30-40 mins

- Ideal for tenderising less expensive cuts of beef
- Quickly brown the joint in hot oil before adding liquid, vegetables and seasoning/herbs
- Cover and cook either on the hob on a low simmer or in the oven

---

### Stewing/Casseroles

(for diced beef, braising steak, shin or leg)

170°C, Gas Mark 3

1.5-2.5 hours

- For best results seal the meat in a little oil before adding vegetables and liquid stock
- For convenient and tasty beef curries try adding diced beef to shop-bought sauces



*"Beef is so versatile and is perfect for a host of meal occasions, from the convenience of children's favourites such as Spaghetti Bolognese, burgers and meatballs, to wonderful family roasts or indulgent steaks. My own tip is never to cook meat straight from the fridge. It's important not to leave it sitting around in a hot steamy kitchen for hours on end, but keep it covered and leave it out long enough to allow it to get closer to room temperature. You'll find you get a much more tender piece of meat that way."* - **Minette Batters**

# WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR...

**The Union flag** (or the English, Scottish or Welsh flags) really can be trusted, whether on fresh cuts or ready meals. These flags should only be used on British beef which has been born and raised in the UK.

Any use of the Union flag on imported beef is technically illegal and any supermarket which used it incorrectly would be liable to prosecution for misleading labelling.

**The Red Tractor logo is the most widespread assurance mark and one of the best indicators of British beef. It also provides a guarantee of traceability and independent inspection.**

In addition, the Red Tractor logo indicates that the beef has been responsibly produced in compliance with a range of welfare and environmental standards.

For example, it tells you that the beef derives from a farm which has been independently inspected by Red Tractor Assurance.

British cattle have individual ear tags and cattle passports and the Red Tractor logo means that the abattoir and packing plant has also been independently inspected, including a check on its own traceability record keeping.

In short the Red Tractor logo guarantees full chain traceability, and the Union flag in the logo means that the beef has been born, reared, processed and packed in the UK.

**You can't buy better than that!**

*Produced by Ladies in Beef 2013*



**Look for the Red Tractor Logo on British beef**

