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Meet the ladies who have carved a niche of their own in a male-dominated sector

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THE QUEENS OF STEAK

Who says fair ladies and a good-sized steak can't go together?

Words MERYL KOH

When it comes to the topic of a good steak, it seems, more often than not, that men are always the ones associated with being beef-lovers. Perhaps it is all that iron, or that a slab of beef is not an image one associates with ladies, but it is about time this stereotype gets a makeover.

"I think women tend to think meat is unhealthy and fattening due to the marbling," shares Ingrid Prasatya, founder of The Society Group. Brigid Ann Loh, director at New Eastern, affirms this line of thought: "A lot of women feel that when they eat beef, they will become fat.

Whenever I am dining with girlfriends, they usually opt for fish and chicken. When I say that I am having beef, they will question why I'm eating beef again!"

However, Prasatya shares that there are also leaner cuts of beef, such as the tenderloin, sirloin, or even the T-bone. "Many people don't realise that beef is packed full of vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants such as vitamin B, iron, zinc and omega 3," says Prasatya.

While male players tend to dominate the beef industry, Leelyne Yeo, general manager at Culina, manages to hold her own against the men, in the 20 years that she has worked at the brand. "In male-dominated industries, women typically have to work harder to prove themselves. Sometimes, people talk-down to me. When that happens, it is important to be professional, hold your own and be confident. Eventually, the knowledge and results will speak for themselves to win credibility and respect," says Yeo, in response to the challenges she faces being a female purveyor in the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry. In order to beef up her repertoire, Yeo read up voraciously, humbly learning from suppliers, and also the relevant marketing bodies, such as the Meat and Livestock Australia.

Surprisingly, all three women enjoy different cuts of meat, each choice a reflection of their own personality and proving that ladies do indeed know how to savour their beef. "When I was working in Japan in my first

job, the Japanese taught me how to eat beef raw, in *tsukiyaki*, or in barbecue, along with their different cuts of beef and quality. That was my first exposure to fine-dining," shares Loh, whose choice is usually a filet mignon, although she admits to enjoying a Porterhouse when particularly ravenous. Interestingly, Loh likes her beef well-done, and shares that a good well-done steak still has a line of red in the centre, but with no more blood coming out of it. "This method of preparation puts a lot of pressure on the chef to get the tenderness of the beef right," Loh laughs. "I actually eat my steak with a dessert wine, as the fragrance and sweetness complements the beef. I don't like to follow the typical rules of eating!"

Quite like Loh, Prasatya is also one who delves in depth into the question on her favourite cut, sharing her expertise and preferences. "My favourite cut is the rib-eye, because it is full of rich flavour from the high marbling content and the texture is smooth and very tender," shares the restaurateur, who is clearly not a lady to shy away from some marbling. "With grass-fed beef, I prefer to match the leaner, metallic flavours from the grass with the lighter styles of red or a bit heavier with Pinotage, like pinot noir, syrah or Rhone blends, which are all from cooler climates. With grain-fed, I look at the deeper cereal flavours of the internal fat structure matching it with bigger heavier wines like Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz or Bordeaux blends," explains Prasatya.



Ingrid Prasatya

Many people don't realise that beef is packed full of vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants such as vitamin B, iron, zinc and omega 3.

Yeo's answer, on the other hand, is simple and concise: "My vote goes to Rangers Valley Angus striploin. It has a good meat bite and flavour, and will be perfectly matched with Torbreck Woodcutter's Shiraz."

While all three ladies provide different perspectives and come from different standpoints, one common thread shines through brightly — finding women who love their beef isn't that difficult after all. **WD**



Leelyne Yeo

