



page 8	Labyrinth. Santos Bregaña
page 10	El Capricho. José Gordón
page 16	Deep freezing
page 18	Chart of the ox

Fresh Products

page 22	forequarter
page 23	flank
page 24	leg
page 25	aged premium ox loin
page 26	aged loin of working cow
page 27	shoulder blade
page 28	chuck tender
page 29	chuck
page 30	shoulder
page 31	lean meat + lean flank meat
page 32	oxburger
page 33	short ribs + short ribs on the bone
page 34	flank steak
page 35	rump
page 36	ox eye - rump tail cut
page 37	silverside
page 38	ox shank
page 39	ossobuco
page 40	bones with marrow + tendons
page 41	aged ox chop + carpaccio
page 42	sirloin
page 43	kidney fat
page 44	ox tail
page 45	skirt steak
page 46	cheeks
page 47	heart
page 48	liver
page 49	tripe
page 50	trotter

Cured meat

page 54	cured ox
page 56	cured tongue
page 57	chorizo (spiced cured sausage)
page 58	salchichón (Spanish salami)
page 59	jar of blood pudding

Prepared meat

page 62	cooked oxtail + cooked tripe + pâté
page 63	cooked beef cheeks + ossobuco

Other products

page 66	tanned ox hide
page 70	Sacrifice. Santos Bregaña

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Graphic design: Atelier Iaia. Santos Bregaña
 Photography: José Luis López de Zubiria
 Translation: Katy Ryan

Legal deposit:
 Printed by Gráficas Castuera, Pamplona

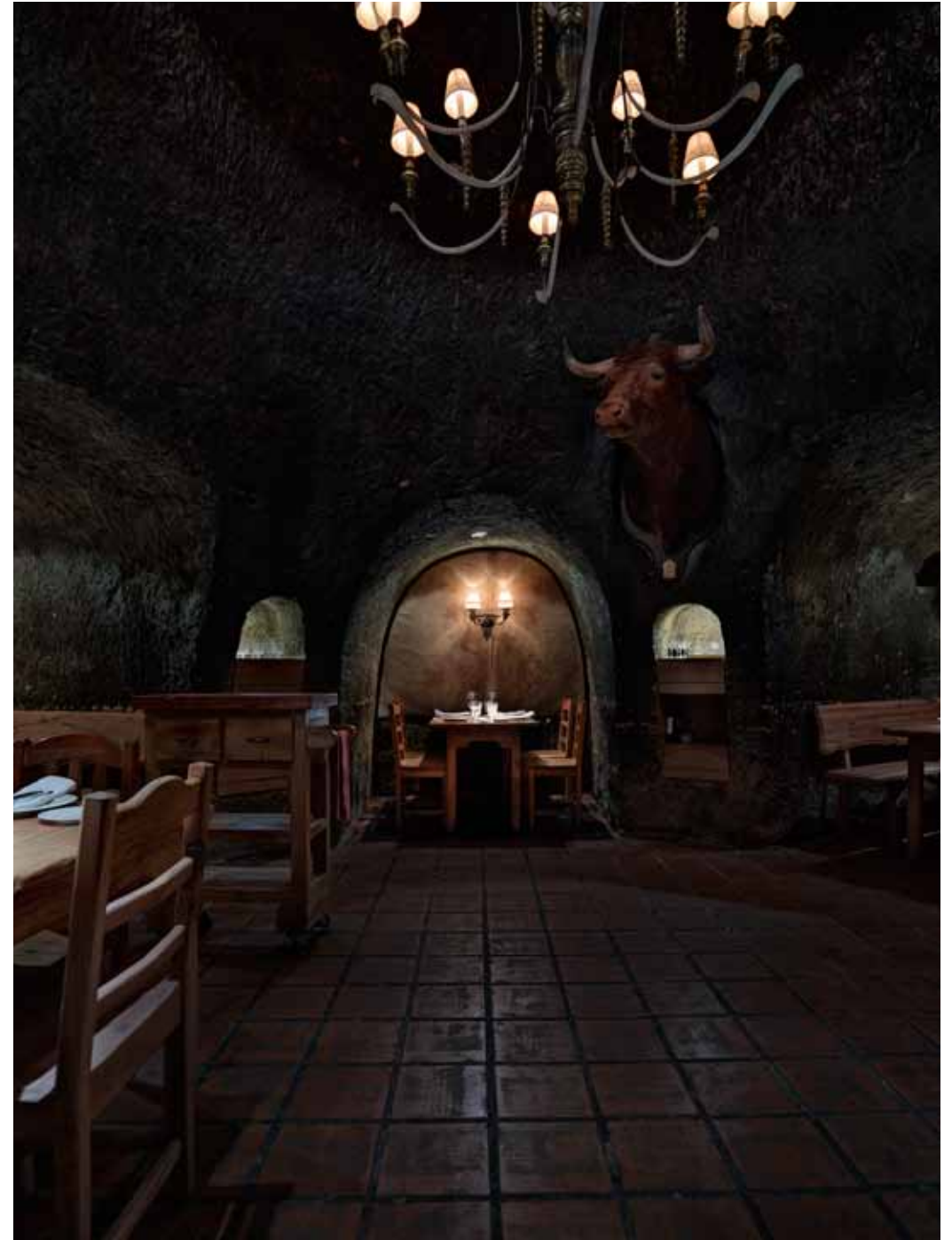
LABYRINTH. Santos Bregaña

Did Theseus perhaps run through an inner labyrinth? Weren't those stone folds similar to a brain in their tortured geometry? We start by asking these questions to try to understand how deep within us the Bull is. It inhabits us. We can take this way of looking at the myth as a metaphor; Ariadne with her thread would represent the thought that guides us from the exterior, from the reality of the senses to the wild, implacable bull, to our own animal nature. Indeed, the threads that connect things to their names are the main resource of magic, and the magician-hunter enters the labyrinth, the jungle, to face his own animal nature; the Minotaur and Ariadne are, after all, siblings. The experience of the intellect and of the senses are two sides of the same coin, like 'having a flavour' and 'tasting'.

Julius Caesar described the fathomless Hercynian forests of central and northern Europe, where the aurochs, the primordial bull, roamed free in the wild woods, unexploited by man. A shapeless maze plagued by aurochs; it is the end of the ancient world in an indigenous, undomesticated Europe. At the edges of this world, young hunters chase the auroch into great traps, taking its hide to make shields and its horns as trophies of their feats, and from these silver-plated horns, they will drink the wine and mead that lead to the ancestral dream, to the labyrinth.

But before Caesar conquered these forests for the Empire, the Bos Primigenius had already conquered our imagination. Like a unicorn on the Ishtar Gate, on Hellenic pottery, in cave paintings, bulls and bison. Zeus was a white bull when he snatched the beautiful Europa. Hercules and Theseus had to defeat a Bull to form part of the the pantheon of civilising heroes.

The Bull is there in the form of a constellation, in our sky and in a thousand forms in rituals and celebrations all over Europe. Let us enter the labyrinth of El Capricho.



EL CAPRICHIO. José Gordón

Hi, my name's José Gordón and I run a restaurant in a small town in León called Jiménez de Jamuz, where the wonderful clay soil makes it possible to hollow out caves; in one of them you will find El Capricho. I was born and raised in this town in a lowly farming family. I enjoyed a rural childhood in contact with nature; I consider myself to be rooted to the land here and its customs and I feel great respect for our products. This respect for the authentic has led me further in my quest for meat and dry-ageing.

At a very early age, when I was twelve, I started my first agricultural studies, completing them in the training centre in Heras, Cantabria. There we had a large area of land for carrying out tests with the crops and livestock and an insemination centre; I was able to see the huge stud bulls, which were treated like gods. Then in the Basque Country, I caught the bug of the culture they have there for red meat and for the way they treat it by ageing it in coolers for up to 25 or 30 days.

In addition to this, my family had a vineyard, and we sold the wine and then in summer we had wonderful Spanish omelettes, with fresh eggs from our hens, and potatoes and greens from the vegetable garden. We used to make sausages and cured meat from our own pigs, which had never eaten grain feed. Then a relative, who had returned from living in Argentina and was an expert in grilling meat, gave me some advice about the art of the barbeque. I started incorporating the first veal and beef cuts onto our little menu in the restaurant, and with their help I first started to experiment with dry-ageing meat.

One day, some meat-loving clients told me that in their land, in deepest Galicia, there were enormous oxen, and suggested that we slaughter one. Driven by curiosity, I began to visit villages and meet people tanned by the sun, with such a great love and respect for these animals that sometimes the oxen seemed like a member of the family.

They would prepare pots of greens and boiled potatoes for the animals; even the water was warmed in winter so that they would drink it. I immersed myself in their



character, their dedication, their sensitivity and nobility.

I witnessed arguments in the family, tears at having to get rid of an ox that had been an honest co-worker and had never let them down. I even received a rude reply when I once tried to buy an ox; the reaction of the owner was 'But what are you saying?' as if I was trying to buy his son.

Since then, almost thirty years ago, I have dedicated most of my time to searching out these types of men who own tame animals, not because they are profitable but because they have been at their side all their lives and it's hard for them to give up their company and their tradition. For the noble, serene character of these animals possibly gives people something different.

I have seen that two animals from the same mother often show great differences even when they are born and brought up on the same farm, which is why I think there is a great influence of character on the quality of their meat.

I visit villages in the mountains in León, Asturias, Galicia and Portugal, looking for these special people; I go into the stables and I ask what they feed the animals, where the animals eat, if they eat well and what they eat. Then I feel the animal's fat, in the chest, in the flank, above the tail. It's at this point in the selection that the ageing process really begins, because if the fat is not good or is insufficient, this changes things before we begin. Trying to guess when the fat has accumulated and if it is soft or mature is essential because if it is very soft, this indicates that the animal has been fattened up quickly and this does not guarantee that the fat has infiltrated the muscle. This also means the fat is more porous, oxidizes more easily and liquefies faster so that the marbling that penetrates the muscle is harder and thicker, making it more difficult to age.

However, if the fat is more consistent you can tell

that it is mature and has been there for a long time, so the fat will almost certainly have penetrated the meat. The skin becomes tighter, as if it were pressing inwards. This way you can get higher levels of intramuscular fat or marbling, the veining is thinner, giving tender, tastier meat. In addition, this type of fat is essential for ageing meat over a long period, because it is this fat that is going to help the meat stand the passage of time better, since the muscle is going to be nourished by it.

I have analysed subcutaneous intramuscular fat and I've seen that the components there are surprising, because in the case of adult animals the unsaturated fats can be as much as 70%, with high contents of oleic and linoleic acids. I think this composition has a lot to do with the evolution of the fat when it is subjected to long ageing processes. Instead of going rancid, it becomes thin, delicate and subtly sweet.

Although I believe more in the individual animals because of the influence of character, it is also essential to speak of breeds, since the search for an authentic product is related to time, to the past, to maturity; just like fruit, things are at their best when they are mature. A four-year-old bull is not the same as a six-year-old, for example, although I understand that it is easier and cheaper to get one that's four years old than six.

The evolution of some breeds has moved us away from the real product, and by this I mean the flavours that have been forgotten but which one recognises as being right and traditional.

The rustic nature of the older breeds is a very important factor, and it helps us to recognise the features of individual animals and to reject other more modern breeds because experience has shown us that they have less culinary value. I think we were wrong when we implanted a gene into a native breed with form and fat so that it would produce more meat and no fat; I wonder if it is healthier and I think we run the risk of losing breeds of exceptional quality

only because they are not profitable as they seem to yield less.

All the main Iberian breeds, which have not been touched genetically for the production of meat, are where we see the genuine product with the best quality, even in animals obtained from cross-breeding. That's what sets us apart. In the Iberian Peninsula, we have a variety of native breeds that are really rustic, with ugly shapes that mean that they fatten up well and resist adverse conditions, allowing them to graze in the high mountains. These types of pastures contain aromatic herbs like rosemary and thyme, and the shoots of the oak trees and acorns. In León, we have wonderful mountains – Cabrera, Babia, Omañas, Ancares— and it's a province with fabulous grasslands, because the meadows are not too wet and nourish the animals more.

Before explaining the ageing, I want to emphasise some things that are very important for me; firstly, transport for the animals. There are bulls that are really heavy, 1500 kg or more; we have slaughtered animals with up to 1200 kg in meat, which means that the live animal would weigh more than 1700 kg. This type of animal requires vehicles that do not have any sharp edges on the floor simply because they are so heavy that when they try to get up, they can cut their legs. I try to get them to the slaughterhouse the day before, so that they are comfortable, with water and straw, because travel always causes stress and stress is one of the great enemies, as it causes blockage of blood vessels and the blood does not flow but stays in the muscles, giving rise to what we commonly call 'fever' or 'lighting up the meat'. The meat darkens, loses flavour and the meat sticks to your hands.

For this reason, it is also necessary to dissuade the slaughterhouse operators from prodding the animals with electric prods, as a decent death is important, not only from the moral point of view but also because of the quality of the meat.

Once we have the carcass, we have to keep it at the right temperature so that it goes correctly into rigor mortis, a state of permanent rigidity of the muscle tissue. When we slaughter the animal, the blood stops circulating and as a result, so does the oxygen supply. Hormone regulation and metabolic processes stop working, and this is when glycolysis appears, and glucose does not reach the muscles, decreasing the formation of adenosine triphosphate and making links between the actin and myosin at myofibrillar level. Moreover, lactic acid is generated, which decreases the pH, causing a denaturation of the protein with the help of calcium. With denaturation, water is released (exudation).

Later, the carcass is hung for at least for at least ten days, between 3 and 8 degrees centigrade, and this is where the ageing work begins. I try to age the carcass, with the tenderloin included to protect the sirloin, for 15 or 20 days. Dry ageing is a process of drying and softening that results in the penetration of the subcutaneous fat into the interior, making more buttery meat. An enzymatic process occurs, causing the breakdown of the protein by breaking the fibres and releasing water for texture and juiciness. However, there is a loss of juices or liquids. This results in a loss of weight, which will influence the concentration of flavour, odour and colour.

I cut the carcass into four pieces and try to age them separately. I butcher the legs almost immediately and I get three cuts out of them; topside, silverside and knuckle, which are used to make *cecina* or cured beef. With some animals, these cuts may require ageing for more than three years. I also get three great cuts from the legs; the ox eye, rump cap and rump. These cuts are excellent for grilling, and even for cooking at low temperatures. I dry-age the flank for about 45 days, depending on the animal, and from that I get two wonderful cuts; flank steak and a strip of rib, which is excellent for all sorts of dishes. The flank steak, which is the end of the flank, is perfect for grilling.



I cut up the forequarter immediately to make our great oxburgers. Then I deal with the rib cuts. I cut out the sirloins, depending on the animal, at between 15 and 30 days, making sure they have been protected by the kidney fat, which gives great smoothness to the already great texture of the sirloin, making this part of the animal an exquisite cut.

I keep the slab of ribs for longer. Here various aspects influence this cut; the outer cover, the thickness, colour and quality of the fat. It can be soft, as we mentioned before, having accumulated in the last 4 to 8 months, or firm, if it has been there for years. In this case infiltration into the interior is slower, since this fat loses its consistency more gradually.

It also protects the meat much more; it normally comes from older animals and the nerves and tendons are harder, so it is reasonable to spend longer on the ageing, except in unusual cases.

The colour of the fat is a good indicator of diet and the life that the animal has had; if it has grazed and if it has been in the sun it will have yellow fat, although this may be to do with the amount of corn it has eaten. In addition, in the case of much older animals that have worked, the muscles have a much redder colour, even after long ageing, unlike the animals that have been intensively fattened, which usually have whiter fat which is rice-coloured or ivory-coloured; the muscle in these cases is also paler.

There are also differences in the time that it will take for the fat to go rancid. Animals of the same breed and age may have fat with different colourings, and that difference of colour will show how long each one takes to go rancid, the time that they can endure and where the limits may be.

To try to reach these limits in ageing, we first have to create the right climate with a temperature that is as constant as possible and not above three degrees. Then we must monitor the moisture, which allows us to measure liquids over time. In other words, if

we dry the meat very quickly we lose the liquid fast, and we won't get the same texture or unctuousness. However, if we use static cold with a gentle breeze we can also play with the temperature and thus get more appropriate moisture percentages. If we add a daily monitoring of the surfaces that will be sealed, we have got the main part of the process covered. We also like to make an initial assessment about the most relevant aspects of the cut, which will help us to predict when it will be ready. For example, when I put a loin of beef in the cold store, I put a label on it that tells me the breed, age, fat cover, e.g. 2, 3, 4 or 5, the colour of the fat, date of slaughter and estimated time it will be ready. Then after the estimated time, if I see that the meat is very red and that it does not have the right texture when I open it, that there is not much intramuscular fat infiltration and that the subcutaneous fat is abundant, I return it to the cold store again to give it a bit longer.

This document is a catalogue, the result of our work about the products that we sell. The work we have done over many years has borne fruit and today El Capricho is considered by some (Time, The Guardian, Vogue and others) as the restaurant which offers the best ox steaks in the world.

DEEP FREEZING

Cold storage is the only system that will mean that the taste, colour, natural smell and the appearance of the aged product does not differ from the fresh product. Through the action of low temperatures on the food, it is possible to eliminate microbial or enzyme activity that can destroy it.

In the food industry, two types of freezing are used:

- With mechanical systems, using compressors and closed-circuit evaporation, which cools the air until it reaches a temperature of -45°C .
- With cryogenic systems, using nitrogen and carbon dioxide. This is the system that we use, with pressurised nitrogen, which expands as it changes from a liquid to a gas and absorbs heat under the laws of thermodynamics. The nitrogen comes into direct contact with the meat product and forms an inert atmosphere around it, without leaving residue or altering its organoleptic condition.

One determining factor in the quality of the product is the speed of freezing, since slow cooling causes the formation of few, large ice crystals that are trapped inside the food, while in quick freezing, there will be many ice crystals but they will be microscopic.

The large crystals that form in slow freezing break the cell membrane, with the consequent loss of aromas, flavour and nutrients. Moreover, the product will suffer great deterioration in texture and visual appearance.

However, when the freezing is extremely fast, microcrystals are formed inside and outside the cell, balancing concentrations and preventing dehydration. This prevents breakage and loss by dehydration, keeping the taste and appearance of the fresh product once defrosted. It is the best guarantee of hygiene and quality.



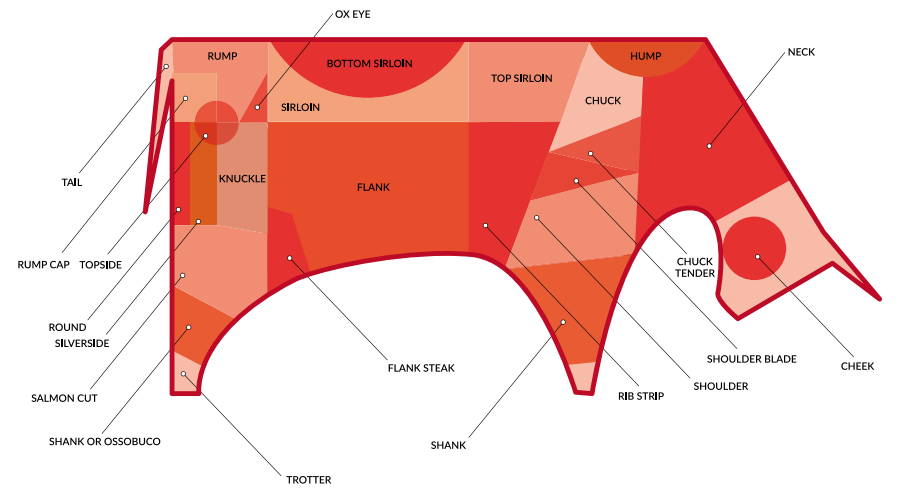


CHART OF THE OX

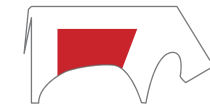
FRESH PRODUCTS

All our fresh products are sold deep-frozen, unless the customer expressly requests otherwise, for which delivery terms can be agreed. Forequarters, flanks, sirloins, chops and kidney fat are always served chilled.



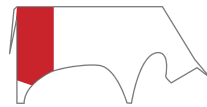
FOREQUARTER

The forequarters are aged for between 7 and 15 days. They weigh an average of between 80 and 100 kg. With the meat from our forequarters you can make high quality burgers. For this, it is good to mix three parts of the forequarter with one of flank. This piece can be prepared in smaller cuts to suit the customer.



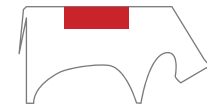
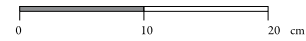
FLANK

The flanks of our oxen are aged for about 40 days and weigh about 40 kg. They can be prepared in cuts to suit the customer. The flank of animal gives us the strip of ribs and the flank steak; the rest, the flank meat itself, can be used to mix with the forequarter to make burgers and to add flavour



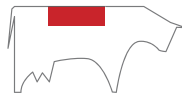
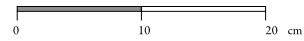
LEG

The legs are aged between 15 and 30 days and they weigh about 100 kg. The leg gives 3 cuts that are traditionally used for making 'cecina' or cured beef: topside, silverside and stifle. The leg also contains the rump, the rump cap, the rump tail and the hock, which if we do not bone we can use to get ossobuco. We can also get bones with marrow from the leg.



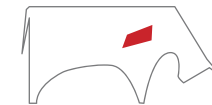
AGED PREMIUM OX LOIN

We sell our ox loin whole, in other words with the eight ribs and the bottom sirloin or fillet steak. It is one of finest cuts on the animal and one that can stand the longest ageing. The ageing is individual for each piece, following certain parameters such as breed, age or marbling.



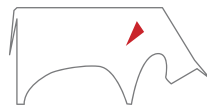
AGED LOIN WORKING BEEF

We came up with this name of 'working cow' to indicate that it is a cow reared in a different way. These are cows with great hormonal purity since they have not given birth for at least a year, and as a result of this they are closer to an ox in the sense that both animals have meat and fat that have not been altered by hormones.



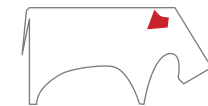
SHOULDER BLADE

This is a cut that comes from the forequarter. It has a characteristic central tendon, and comes from the part of the animal behind the shoulder blade. It weighs between 3 and 4 kg and it is always cut as one piece. It is very tender, very juicy meat and it is especially good for roasting because of its juiciness. It is also good for *larding*, which is when you use a special larding needle to thread raisins, dates or pieces of ham into the meat before cooking it.



CHUCK TENDER

This also comes from the forequarters, next to the blade steak. Our cuts weigh between 2 and 3 kg. It is a great cut for making boned rolled meat (you open up the meat to get a long slice and fill it with whatever you want). On request, we can remove the tendon so that it can be stuffed with ingredients like peppers, bacon, dates or mushrooms.



CHUCK

This comes from the forequarter and is the extension of the top sirloin towards the neck. It's a very tender, marbled cut of meat. The pieces are between 5 and 10 kg but we can prepare them in chunks as desired. It gives fillets that are full of fat for barbequing or grilling. Minced, it can be used to make fabulous meatballs; it can also be prepared as carpaccio, steak tartare and even top-quality burgers.



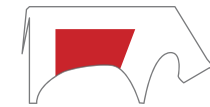
SHOULDER

This cut comes from the forequarter. The cuts from our oxen weigh an average of 8 kg. It is very tender, juicy meat. It is very good for making steaks, steak tartare, stews and roasts. For roasting, it is good if it has a good layer of fat, as it is a fat with superb quality and gives more flavour. You can also make cured beef (*cecina*) with it.



LEAN MEAT

We call the cuts from the forequarter lean meat, and they can be used for multiple purposes. We're talking about chuck, chuck tender and shoulder. These cuts have hardly any fat, so if you want to make burger it is usually mixed with meat from the flank, which gives it some fat.



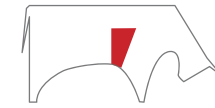
LEAN FLANK MEAT

These are chunks of meat from the flank, with a high percentage of fat, so it is suitable for mixing with other meats, for example, from the forequarter to make burgers.



OXBURGER

This oxburger is minced meat, moulded and deep-frozen, and it has no ingredient other than a little salt. To prepare it, the lean meat from the forequarter is used, as well as the flank, which gives it juiciness because it has more fat. Our oxburger is characterised by the pure taste of the meat. It has a very nice texture because it is pressed very gently and has no additives, colourants or preservatives. It has been made exclusively with authentic ox beef, coming from animals some of which are more than 10 years old; it's a product which is unique in the market.



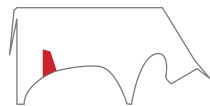
SHORT RIBS

This piece comes from the flank, between the fifth and eighth rib. We prepare it without the bone, but if someone wants it on the bone, you just have to ask for it. It is a piece weighing between 1.5 and 4 kg, with great marbling, and it gives wonderful results on the barbeque if previous cooked at low temperature.



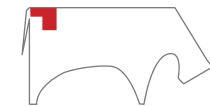
SHORT RIBS ON THE BONE

With the bone, this weighs between 5 and 7 kg.



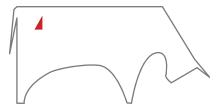
FLANK STEAK

This is a cut that comes from the flank and it is oval. It is a muscle of intense flavour. It is a very scarce cut since each animal has about 1 kg of flank steak, and it is very tasty grilled, or in strips cut crosswise, with the grain of the meat. It is also suitable for all types of stuffings.



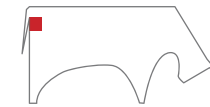
RUMP

The rump is in the leg; specifically, where the end of the hip joins the bottom sirloin in the saddle. It has a V shape and in our oxen it weighs between 8 and 10 kg; we cut it into small chunks to make it easier to handle. It is aged with the leg for a month. It has great texture, is juicy and has a lot of flavour, so it is fabulous for making steak tartare. It is also very good for making steaks both on the grill and barbeque.



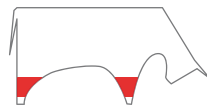
OX EYE - RUMP SIDE CUT

This is a leg muscle that goes up from the knuckle to the rump and weighs between 2 and 3 kg. It is a meat that is very marbled and is very tender and juicy. It can be used for grilling or barbequing, both in medallions and fillets.



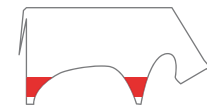
RUMP CAP OR BOTTOM OF SILVERSIDE

This is located in the leg, specifically at the end of the silverside and below the rump. It is a muscle that joins the leg to the saddle. It is a very small cut; you can get two pieces, of approximately 1.5 kg each from each animal, and it is highly prized because it has a high percentage of fat marbling and is very tender and tasty. It is great for barbequed fillets, steak tartare or *tataki*.



OX SHANK

This comes from the forequarters and the hindquarter. There is more collagen in the forequarter shanks and therefore they are more tender. The shanks from our oxen weigh about 5 kg each, but they can be cut smaller if desired. It is very gelatinous, smooth meat, due to its high collagen content, and it comes from the same area as the ossobuco but is traditionally boned and cut lengthwise.



OSSOBUCO

Ossobuco is the name for the cut that comes from the shanks, which are the end of the animal's leg next to the hoof, cut crosswise into thick slices with the bone left in, and strictly speaking ossobuco comes from the hind legs. It is a spectacular cut because of the size of our oxen and their quality, and it is very tasty stewed and in risotto. As it is a visually stunning cut and can be carved at the table, it can be a star dish in a restaurant. Its intense, sweet buttery flavour comes from the presence of the bone in the stew, with its collagen and especially with the inner treasure of the bone marrow.



BONES WITH MARROW

Whole, cut crosswise or lengthwise; they are highly suitable for barbequing although you can make other types of dishes such as soups or for browning. They have a deep, intense flavour.

TENDONS

The tendon is cartilaginous. It is mainly located in the extremities and in the chuck of the animal. It is excellent for slow cooking and is widely used in creative cooking. It has a strong flavour and texture.

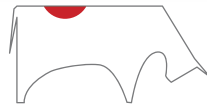


AGED OX CHOP

Although we sell the sirloins whole, on request it is possible to buy individual aged ox chops or working beef chops.

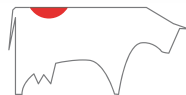
CARPACCIO

Carpaccio is a cut that is obtained from the sirloin of the cow or ox. Given long periods of ageing, it is redolent of relaxation and calm, with all the work behind it. In the mouth, it has a full flavour, with nuances and an incredibly delicate texture.

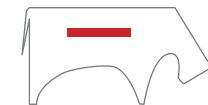


SIRLOIN

This is located on the loin, and is matured with the rib and the kidney area for 15 to 30 days, depending on the animal. A sirloin from one of our oxen weighs between 4 and 6 kg. It is a meat that is highly prized for its tenderness, characterised by its texture. Our oxen give sirloins with excellent flavour, as they are old animals and the sirloin has the special flavour of age.

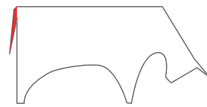


**SIRLOIN FROM
A WORKING COW**



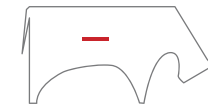
KIDNEY FAT

Kidney fat is the most delicate fat in the animal, and we get it by melting the fat that covers the kidneys. We melt it at a low temperature so as not to damage its structure, as this is fat of a very high quality, which has accumulated slowly over the years with an almost absolute hormonal purity that makes it unique. It has a very low melting point and is ideal for baking and for inspiring cooks and chefs.



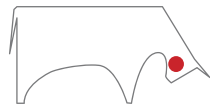
OX TAIL

An ox tail weighs between 1.5 and 2 kg and is delicious stewed. It is high in collagen, which makes it very smooth in the mouth and allows us to break it up and make it into different dishes.



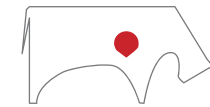
SKIRT STEAK

The skirt steak is the muscle that protects the entrails of the animal, joining the liver to the lungs. An ox has about 2 kg of entrails. It is very popular because it cooks fast, and is one of the tastiest cuts on the grill because of the marbling of the fat in the meat. It is a very thin cut that is covered on both sides by a membrane. It tastes bloody.



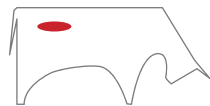
CHEEKS

This is the outside of the cheek. This cut can weigh between 2 and 3 kg. It is very tasty meat, good for stewing or boiling, with a high content of collagen.



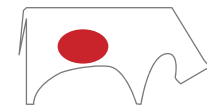
HEART

The heart of our oxen is large and smooth. Properly cut, it has a soft texture and a lot of flavour. It is ideal for kebabs and for flash frying. It has a deep, true flavour, and it seems as if this part of the animal can help us understand its nobility and restrained power.



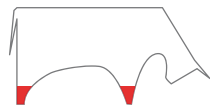
LIVER

The liver has a powerful yet delicate flavour. It is ideal for kebabs and for grilling or frying rare.



TRIPLE

Tripe is made from the two stomachs of the animal, the reticulum and the omasum. It is particularly delicate, differing from the tripe of younger animals. It can be made into slow-cooked traditional stews served in a paprika sauce.

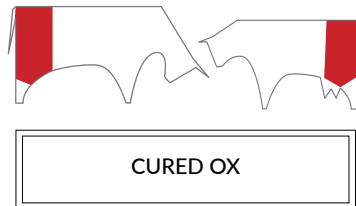


TROTTER



Beef trotter is thick, robust and friendly. It has borne the weight and life of the animal; it is full of collagen and is smooth and delicate in the mouth. It opens the doors to a whole world in the kitchen.

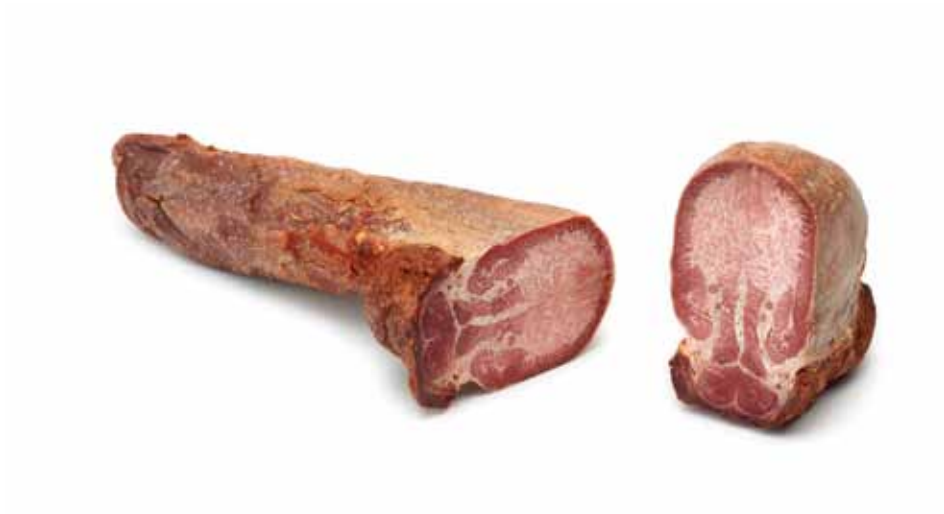
CURED MEAT



Cecina or cured salt ox is a dish fit for kings, obtained from those of our animals which have accumulated these magical veins of fat that melt in the mouth and flood our palate with flavour and undertones.

The legs of our oxen are carefully cut up into four parts: topside, silverside, knuckle and rump; we cover them in a mountain of salt and wait as long as the Master Curer thinks is right for each piece. Then the first drying phase begins and the meat must settle at a constant temperature and controlled humidity. In the last drying process, the Master's art and knowledge for controlling the speed and direction of drying combines with the fat from the animal that will protect the surface. Slow ageing is the perfect ally for achieving a sublime product. We serve it in whole pieces, in wedges or thinly sliced.





CURED TONGUE

As its name suggests, this cut comes from the animal's tongue. After a long traditional curing process of more than two months, we get a cured tongue of great quality.



CHORIZO
(SPICED CURED SAUSAGE)

Made from beef and beef fat with a recipe that is exclusive to El Capricho®. Cold-cured and smoked according to the tradition in Leon.



SALCHICHÓN
(SPANISH SALAMI)

In this cured spicy sausage, beef is mixed with Iberian and Asturian-Celtic pork to give a delicious mixture with a peppery flavour that makes it unique.



JAR OF BLOOD PUDDING

Blood pudding is a traditional product from the region of Leon, and its main ingredients are blood and onion. This *morcilla* is, along with *cecina* one of the most representative of the cuisine of Leon. El Capricho® presents its ox blood sausage made solely with products from the ox as part of its high-quality artisan product line. To cook, put the contents of the pot in a saucepan over a low heat without oil for about ten minutes.

PREPARED MEAT

This is an exclusive product because of its scarcity. It is stewed with red wine, and because of the collagen, it is very pleasant in the mouth and very tasty.

The tripe, nose and the trotters of our old oxen have a very special texture and are clearly different from the tripe of younger animals. We make a traditional stew with them.

Our animals are superior right down to the liver, which is a tender part with a rich flavour, and with added spices makes our pâté a delicate unique product.

Flavour and texture come together in this dish of beef cheeks, which is high in collagen and low in fat.

Our ossobuco comes from the huge shanks of our animals, which have high collagen content, and it is smooth in the mouth and very pleasant to the palate. It is stewed in a traditional way and only requires heating up.

COOKED OXTAIL COOKED TRIPE



PÂTÉ



COOKED CHEEK



OSSOBUCO



OTHER PRODUCTS



TANNED OX HIDE

They are each unique and each skin has its own personality; they are soft to the touch and are an impressive, magical size. Owning one is owning something grand.



SACRIFICE. Santos Bregaña

Beyond the gourmet culture, where 'a corpse becomes philosophy', ritual death -the sacrifice of a living thing - is the necessary evil that we humans accept as a consequence of our condition as omnivores; death that gives life.

Through anthropology, we can understand the animals that eat what they hunt or sacrifice, participate in it and devour it together. This is the case in hominids who perhaps tried to minimise the collective responsibility of homicide. We see chimpanzees alone eating fruit and leaves, but together in groups when they have hunted an animal, and so it is with man, whose rituals extend from the dawn of culture. For us, westerners, the *paterfamilias* or *mageiros* (professional chef-magician-slaughterer), will take care of the slaughter, the fire and carving the meat with their sharp, symbolic knife. From magic to the parody of a North American with the neighbours round for a barbeque in their garden, meat is ritualised in a way that has essentially stayed the same for thousands of years of civilization.

Doesn't Christianity exalt the death of an Asian god and his 'communion' through the symbolic consumption of his flesh and blood in the ceremony of the mass, the Eucharist?

The pact that every culture imposes as a standard has changed throughout our history in relation to the slaughter of our animals. In the Hellenic world, these processes are described as a civilizing deception (Hesiod records in his Theogony: *Prometheus favoured humans and deceived Cronus's son Zeus by offering him an ox's bones covered with fat, keeping the lean meat for him and the humans. To appease the wrath of the king of Olympus after this, in every sacrifice the Greeks had to burn the animal's fat and communicate with the gods through the smoke, offering them their share*).

Or collective sacrifices, which remain in our vocabulary in the term "hecatomb". This was the sacrifice of one hundred head of cattle. The bones, fat and skin of the victims were burned in honour of the gods, but the meat was consumed by those attending the sacrifice.

To the antiseptic slaughterhouse death of our days, where perhaps the concern is more for physical than spiritual hygiene. It is encouraging to see that modern advances - perceived by some as setbacks - are putting slaughter back into a domestic context again, and in Switzerland, for example, a place considered civilised, farmers can slaughter their animals at home, with the assistance of a vet, giving their beloved animal a dignified, calm end. This too will be done here eventually, and El Capricho aims for an animal's death to happen under the conditions of maximum respect.

These oxen have names and have been loved. They live in large open spaces in peace and tranquillity. When they have to be slaughtered, they go calmly to their death accompanied by those who have cared for them. They have had a dignified life and their death should be so too. This is what El Capricho intends.

Notes:

Conon, after defeating the Lacedaemonians in the naval battle of Cnidus, slaughtered a hecatomb and held a feast for all the Athenians.
Athenaeus: Deipnosophistae, 1, 2D

Minos paid his debt of gratitude to Jove by sacrificing a hundred bulls, as soon as he left his ship and set foot on the land.

Ovid: Metamorphoses, VIII

Laocoön was at the altar sacrificing a great bull.

Virgil: Aeneid, II

The viscera (liver, lungs, pancreas, kidney and heart) are roasted on a spit. The entrails, contained in the cavity of the lower abdomen (the stomach and the intestines), are prepared in sausages and blood sausages. The mageiros (always male) is the sacrificer and then butcher and cook. All edible flesh has to come from a ritual death. When the meat is shared out, the meal begins. The sacrifice serves to confirm the cohesion of the group and the coherence of the imagery of the community in relation to the divine powers.

Détienne, M. and Vernant, J.-P. : La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec, pp. 20-25

The primitive variety of oxen that were raised in Crete, the Bos primigenius, was voracious and fearsome, but able because of its strength to do all sorts of work. They would catch it young and tame it, cutting off its horns. From the cowherds' own acrobatics came the bull festivals, which the Minoans loved, and which were used to make a selection. This powerful animal was the sacred animal, the Minotaur.

Glotz, G.: The Aegean civilization, p. 143

Medea offered Jason a flask of lotion, blood-red juice of the two-stalked, saffron-coloured Caucasian crocus, which would protect him against the bull's fiery breath; this potent flower first sprang from the blood of the tortured Prometheus.

The Cretans and Mycenaean used bull's blood, plentifully diluted with water, as a magic to fertilise crops and the trees; only the priestess of Mother Earth could drink it pure without being poisoned.

Robert Graves, Greek Myths p.150b, 152g-155, note 1

They approached Aea by Circe's riverside cemetery, where male corpses wrapped in untanned ox-hides were exposed on the tops of willow-trees for birds to eat - the Colchians bury only female corpses.

Robert Graves, Greek Myths, 152b

On the 14th day of the month Skiroforion, Athens celebrated the feast day of the Bufonias, literally the 'murder of the ox'. Taking advantage of its master's neglect, a working ox approached the altar of Zeus and began to eat the offerings placed on the altar. Faced with this sacrilege, the priest of Zeus picked up an axe in anger and struck the animal, killing it. Scared by the crime he has just committed, the "murderer of the ox", the bouphonos, ran away in a hurry, leaving the weapon at the scene of the crime. He took shelter in Crete, but was called back by Athens by order of the Delphic oracle. Only he would be able to stem the famine that resulted from the death of the animal.

Détienne, M.: The gardens of Adonis, pp. 127-129.



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