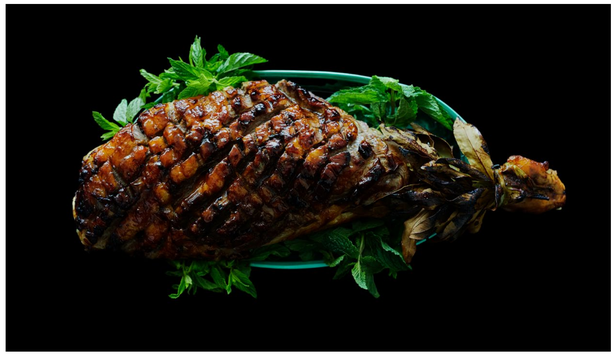
Rare Medium
2026 Red Meat Trends

A resource inspiring chefs to use and diners to choose Australian beef and lamb on menus

Summary

COVER IMAGE — A GLAZED LAMB LONG-LEG BY CHEF MARK BEST



In 2026, Australian red meat will continue to assert its place on menus through the creativity and craft of our foodservice sector and the passion of our producers. From paddock to plate, Australia's cattle, sheep, and goat industries are pushing boundaries — supported by innovation across the supply chain — to deliver world-class beef, lamb, goat, and veal to kitchens around the globe.

The modern diner is discerning. They crave global flavour, provenance, and indulgence — but they want it to feel accessible. At this intersection, where budgets tighten yet appetite for experience grows, chefs are responding with intention and ingenuity. Techniques are evolving, flavour profiles are expanding, and cultural influences are colliding. The old rule book? It's gone. In its place: menus that celebrate craft, creativity, and connection.

The foodservice landscape is evolving at pace — shaped by shifting consumer expectations, economic realities, and a renewed appetite for creativity and connection. In this dynamic environment, Australian beef and lamb stand poised to lead, not follow; and in this resource, we present you with six key trend concepts – the 2026 Sizzling Six – for how chefs will use, and diners will choose Australian beef and lamb on menus.

Each trend reflects a shift in how chefs inspire diners, add value, and showcase Australian beef and lamb at their best. Together, they reveal a future where sustainability meets desirability, and provenance meets possibility — ensuring red meat remains not just relevant, but essential, in the evolving dining experience.

The 2026 Sizzling Six provides insights, inspiration and executional examples through the foodservice sector - bringing to life the best of beef and lamb on menus for 2026 and beyond.

Mary-Jane Morse
Meat & Livestock Australia
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THE 2026 SIZZLING SIX

Six key trends shaping how chefs cook, and diners connect with red meat in 2026

01
All Cuts Considered

Whole-animal utilisation moves from niche to norm, driven by sustainability, cost efficiency, and culinary craft. Secondary cuts and offal become menu heroes, transforming waste into wonder.

02
Remixed Roots

Third-culture cuisine and borderless creativity redefine authenticity. Chefs remix heritage recipes with modern techniques and local produce, using beef and lamb as canvases for global flavour mashups.

03
The Main Event

Single-focus venues and signature dishes celebrate mastery and repetition. From steak-frites to birria, these concepts turn simplicity into cult status.

04
Cured & Crafted

Slow craft returns as chefs embrace curing, smoking, and ageing. Beef and lamb charcuterie reframes preservation as an art form, delivering depth, story, and inclusivity.

05
Living Luxe

In a two-speed economy, luxury becomes attainable. Premium cuts, dry-aged steaks, and marbled lamb elevate everyday dining moments, offering indulgence through craft and experience rather than extravagance.

06
Stacks Of Snacks

Grazing culture thrives as diners seek flexibility and fun. Snackable formats — sliders, skewers, ribs, and jerky — deliver big flavour in small bites, from bar menus to retail shelves.

Welcome to the Sizzling Six

The Sizzling Six are not intended to be definitive – nor are they exclusive – in fact, many of the examples showcased naturally touch on multiple trends simultaneously.

Think of them more as guiding principles of modern Australian cooking as we move into 2026 – as reflections of the diverse and delicious dining landscape we are so privileged to enjoy. Each of the Sizzling Six is backed by domestic and global insights and ladders up to a suite of socioeconomic macro trends impacting consumption and dining here and around the world.

In the following pages, we will explore six key territories shaping the way we are cooking and dining into 2026 and beyond – and provide examples of how each shows up on menus through the foodservice sector.

For each trend, we have identified five venue types to highlight in our On the Menu section, demonstrating how the trend is showing up across the sector and providing you with a range of inspirational and executional ideas.

The categories are defined as follows:

CUTTING EDGE CULINARY

Chefs and venues at the forefront of culinary innovation, where new flavours, formats, and dining ideas take shape.

CONTEMPORARY DINING

Modern eateries and bistros that adapt emerging ideas for a wider audience while maintaining a creative edge.

PUBS & CLUBS

Everyday dining hubs that bring trends into the mainstream culture through comfort, familiarity, and community appeal.

FAST CASUAL

Scalable, fast-paced formats that amplify and popularise established food trends across the broader market.

GLOBAL TASTE

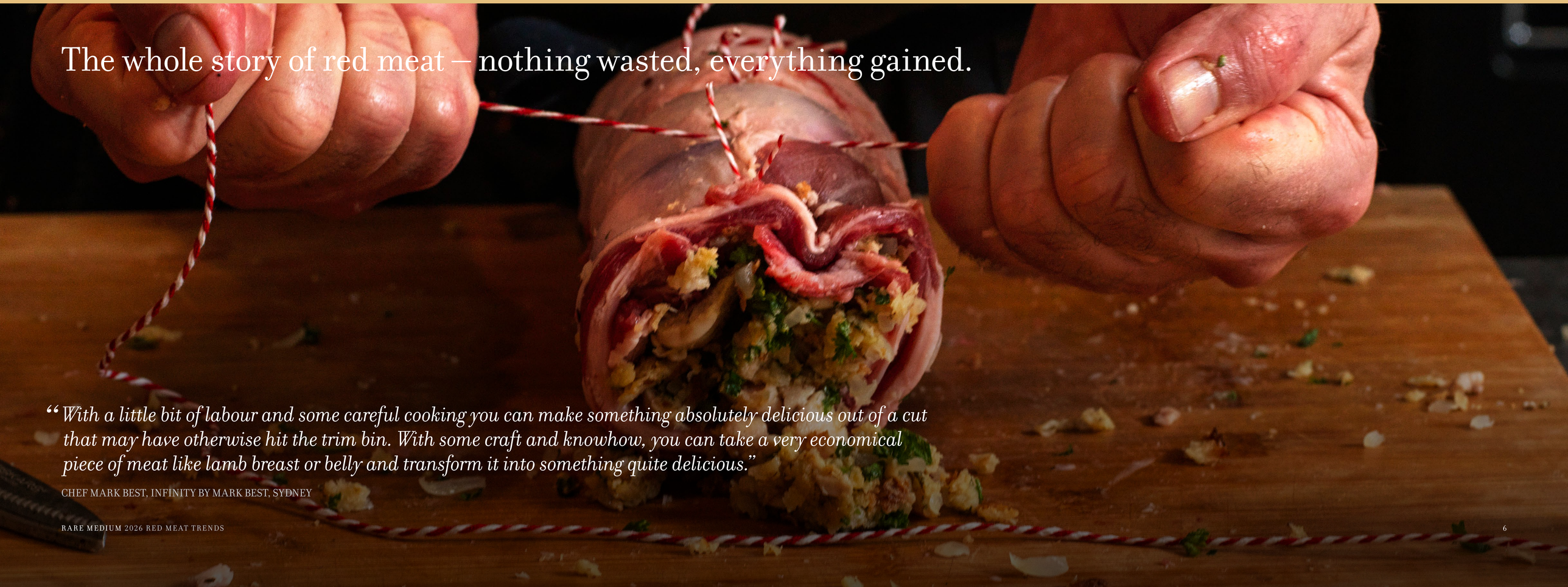
A look beyond Australia to showcase how global influences and parallel movements are shaping the food landscape.

BONUS BITE

An additional taste of the trend and how it is coming to life from leading chefs, butchers, producers and more.

1. All Cuts Considered

The whole story of red meat — nothing wasted, everything gained.



“With a little bit of labour and some careful cooking you can make something absolutely delicious out of a cut that may have otherwise hit the trim bin. With some craft and knowhow, you can take a very economical piece of meat like lamb breast or belly and transform it into something quite delicious.”

CHEF MARK BEST, INFINITY BY MARK BEST, SYDNEY

1. All Cuts Considered — Overview

CHEFS ARE EMBRACING A DELIBERATE, creative approach to whole carcase utilisation — driven by cost, conscience, and culinary ambition. This is not just a sustainability trend; it's a movement that celebrates skill, storytelling, and flavour. Lesser-used cuts and offal are stepping out of the shadows, transformed into modern menu heroes that excite diners and challenge perceptions.

Why now? Sustainability is no longer optional — it's expected. Diners are increasingly conscious of waste and provenance, and they're curious about the craft behind their meals. Whole animal cooking answers this call, reducing waste while unlocking new textures and tastes. Cuts once considered humble — beef shin, lamb neck, tongue, heart — are being elevated through techniques like slow braising, curing, and smoking. Offal is finding its way into tacos, terrines, and charcuterie boards, while bones become the base for nutrient-rich broths, and tallow is key for high-heat frying – and even as a beauty-balm.

For chefs, this trend is a canvas for creativity. It demands knowledge and technique, but rewards with depth of flavour and a compelling story to share. For operators, it offers cost efficiencies and differentiation in a competitive market. And for diners, it delivers an experience that feels ethical, adventurous, and delicious.

From fine dining to casual concepts, All Cuts Considered is shaping menus that honour the animal, respect the environment, and celebrate the ingenuity of the kitchen. It's a philosophy that turns sustainability into desirability — and ensures that every cut of Australian beef and lamb has its moment to shine.

Key Drivers

- → *Cost pressures for operators and consumer interest in sustainability*
- → *Industry drive to improve carcase value and reduce waste*
- → *Chefs rewarded for creativity and nose-to-tail storytelling*

Rigatoni, Ricotta, Tripe & Sweetbread Ragu

VIN-CENZO'S — SURRY HILLS

This Italian-leaning, European eatery from Morgan McGlone, and Nathan and Sali Sasi, took over the old Bar Vincent site and offers up all-cuts-considered dishes like this rigatoni served with a tripe and sweetbread ragu.

All Cuts Considered

ON THE MENU

Ideas and inspiration for through-sector adoption

All Cuts Considered

CONTEMPORARY DINING

Head Chef Ozge Kalvo's Turkish heritage shines with her take on kokoretsi – a street food popular in Turkey and Greece. A version of the dish, traditionally made from the pluck of sheep, has been on the Olympus menu since day one. Kalvo mixes lamb belly mince, with sweetbreads and liver then wraps with caul fat and grills over coals.

Another version sees the kokoretsi wrapped with filo and deep fried for crispy kokoretsi cigars – a more approachable version for diners not accustomed to eating offal (see previous page).

All Cuts Considered

CUTTING EDGE CULINARY

The Sydney Morning Herald 2026 new restaurant of the year Eleven Barrack takes its cues from the grand dining rooms of New York and Paris – offering a premium selection of produce cooked over the woodfired grill.

The menu showcases nose to tail dishes such as tartare, bone marrow, smoked pastrami, chateaubriand, smoked short ribs, and a selection of steak cuts; along with specials like this spiced wagyu tongue with tarragon mayonnaise and dill pickle.

All Cuts Considered

FAST CASUAL

Delicious isn't just for fancy restaurants – the ultimate in convenience, lamb jaffles are now served hot and fresh at APCO service stations across Victoria and South Australia. Greek seasoned, slow cooked lamb shoulder arrives pulled in store and is assembled into bulk mixes for the jaffles. Cooked in an APCO branded jaffle maker, they are designed to be hearty and delicious to eat on the go and at $7, it's also very tasty value.

All Cuts Considered

PUBS & CLUBS

Pirate Life Brewery in South Melbourne sources whole goats from Meredith Dairy to offer a rotating range of delicious goat dishes on the menu.

Here, whole goat is slowly smoked then shredded and served as goat tacos with cashew mole.

All Cuts Considered

GLOBAL TASTE

Chef Natsasi Nu-In is founder/owner of Lady Butcher in Thailand where she sources top-quality Australian beef for hotels and restaurants. Natsasi says "Choosing ingredients for cooking is like choosing a partner. So for me, the best cut of steak is Australian beef."

She is an advocate for using every part of the animal to create dishes like this ISAN Marinated Paleron – Australian oyster blade grilled ISAN style with young coconut and riceberry.

At Dalida in San Francisco the team serves memories and connections through Eastern Mediterranean flavours. Here, executive chef Laura Ozyilmaz plates a warm terrine of lamb tongue and lamb cheek with chicory salad and preserved lemons.

Bonus Bite

TONGUE

Tongues are certainly wagging across menu placements with a popular execution of the cut being served within the humble sandwich – think high-tea-style on soft white, Italian-influenced on panini, or make it Mexican with tongue on a taco.

1. The tongue panini at Vin-Cenzo's
2. Lengua (tongue) taco at Papi's
3. Alanna Sapwell-Stone's crumbed beef tongue sandwich

Cut Consideration

- Lamb neck (fillet and rosette)
- Lamb belly/breast
- Lamb tongue
- Lamb forequarter rack

- Skirt, flank, bavette steaks
- Chuck roll
- Chuck tail flap
- Intercostals
- Tallow

In-Venue Activations

- Nose-to-Tail Night
  A multi-course experience showcasing secondary cuts and offal prepared in creative ways. Each course also highlights a different cooking method to show versatility. Pair with educational storytelling.

- Chef's Cut of the Week
  Rotate a lesser-known cut as a weekly special. Include a short menu note or QR code linking to a behind-the-scenes video of the chef explaining the cut and how it's prepared.

- The Daily Double
  Cost efficiency and diversity on plate — a smaller serve of a premium cut alongside a secondary cut. For example, a petite tender steak served with slow braised intercostals that have been crumbed and fried.

Retail Refresh

- Increase range of beef and lamb in freezer section across cuts and occasions — crumbed offal could be used for a range of dishes

- Partner with a chef for a range of beef and lamb branded potted-rillettes or other waste-conscious value adds

- Consider a more diverse selection of steaks by including secondary cuts for different price points and experiences

All Cuts Considered

> *"20 Chapel revolves around buying whole carcases of beef and using it across our menu. It's something that's very rewarding and gives us a lot of freedom to play around with things we might not normally receive. We have to be creative and clever in what we do; always changing the menu and finding little cuts we didn't know about and figuring out the best way to prepare them. It does have its challenges but it's definitely rewarding."*

CHEF COREY COSTELLO, 20 CHAPEL, MARRICKVILLE

“More chefs, especially in Washington DC, are using off-cuts. The days of just boning racks are gone. You see lamb neck, belly, and shanks being used a lot more. I’ve got a lamb chopped liver on my menu. Smart chefs are taking those non-prime cuts and making them prime; doing rillettes, terrines, braising, pressing, all the things that show creativity and skill.”

CHEF RYAN MOORE
SABABA, WASHINGTON DC

43% of global consumers agree that ‘reducing over-consumption and waste’ is a very important sustainability issue to them personally [1]

43%

8.2% of global consumers say they have tried to reduce waste by using/buying more parts of the animal when buying meat [2]

8.2%

Globally, interest in sustainability is at an all-time high [3] but 89% of consumers are unwilling to pay more for sustainability [4]

89%

[1] MLA Global Tracker 2023
[2] GlobalData Global Consumer Survey 2025 Q2
[3] Google Trends
[4] Australian Retail Outlook KPMG 2025

2. Remixed Roots

Global flavours reimagined — born elsewhere, belonging everywhere.

“Modern Australian cuisine encompasses so many different facets but for me, it’s centered on the migrant story. We’re kind of pushing the idea of “suburban food” which is our best way of describing the food we cook without using the ‘wog’ word. There is an emotional and cultural influence; but it is a heavy influence on the produce that we can use here — because it’s amazing.”

JEAN-PAUL EL TOM, EXECUTIVE CHEF, BABA’S PLACE

2. Remixed Roots — Overview

HERITAGE AND TRADITION are no longer static—they're being remixed into something dynamic, personal, and borderless. Chefs are drawing on cultural lineage and lived experience to create dishes that feel both nostalgic and new. This is not fusion for novelty's sake; it's a thoughtful evolution where techniques, ingredients, and stories intersect to craft menus that resonate with identity and place.

Remixed Roots celebrates the rise of third-culture cuisine—food that reflects a world where borders blur and influences mingle. It's about chefs reinterpreting family recipes through modern technique, local produce, and global inspiration. Think Korean bulgogi made with Australian Wagyu and native pepperberry, or lamb birria tacos infused with bush tomato salsa. These dishes honour tradition while embracing innovation, creating flavours that feel grounded yet adventurous.

For diners, this trend offers new nostalgia—comforting flavours reframed in unexpected ways. For chefs, it's a creative playground that allows personal storytelling and cultural pride to shine. And for Australian beef and lamb, it's an opportunity to become the canvas for these flavour mashups, proving their versatility across cuisines and contexts.

From fine dining tasting menus to casual street food concepts, "Remixed Roots" is shaping a culinary landscape where authenticity is fluid, creativity is celebrated, and global flavours find a home in local kitchens. It's a movement that speaks to identity, inclusivity, and the joy of discovery—one plate at a time.

Key Drivers

- → *Increased travel and ingredient exposure via social media*
- → *Creativity in fusion without cultural appropriation*
- → *Chefs foreground identity and family history; diners crave authentic storytelling*

Piquillo peppers with minced rump cap, paprika spice

Executive chef Jean-Paul El Tom embodies the concept of remixed roots at his restaurants Baba's Place and Corner 75 — telling the stories and experiences of Australian migrants through his interpretation of 'suburban food'. Here, JP takes inspiration from the many stuffed pepper dishes across Europe and elevates it using rump cap mince — lightly fried and finished with paprika spice.

Remixed Roots

ON THE MENU

Ideas and inspiration for through-sector adoption

Remixed Roots

CONTEMPORARY DINING

French technique, Thai flavours, and premium Australian lamb combine in this dish of roast lamb cutlets with herb wafer layered with thyme parsley and Thai basil; Thai basil kosho; lamb jus; and parsnip puree by chef Sam Woods at Ennui.

Remixed Roots

FAST CASUAL

Mexican meets Japanese in this decadent beef birria ramen where the traditions and techniques of both dishes harmoniously and deliciously combine at Radio Taco. Beef forequarter is slowly braised in a large pot of perpetual-broth before the beef pieces are picked and the broth replenished. It's a long, slow process – served fast and fresh.

Remixed Roots

GLOBAL TASTE

James Beard Award-nominated proprietors Camila Arango and Tom Wellings went from bakery pop-ups in Georgetown and Chinatown, to open Pluma by Bluebird at Union Market, and now Flora Pizzeria at The Square in Washington DC. Here, tradition blends seamlessly with fresh takes on toppings like this sourdough base with braised lamb neck, labneh, roasted grapes, herbs and blossoms.

Nanyang Blossom opened in Knightsbridge in 2024 under chef Daren Liew – a proud ambassador of Southeast Asian cuisine in London with roots in Penang, Malaysia, and decades of experience in Singapore and Europe. Liew brings a unique blend of authentic heritage and modern technique to every dish served – like sliced Australian sirloin marinated in a black Sarawak pepper sauce and served in crispy dough with poached asparagus and blue pea rice.

Remixed Roots

CUTTING EDGE CULINARY

Chef Darryl Martin heads up the Bentley Group's latest venue Watermans where his deep knowledge of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern flavours brings fresh flair to classic cuts. Here, the full beef flavour of marbled wagyu sirloin holds up to the simple complexities of shatta – a hot sauce popular across the Middle East.

"My take on shatta involves a seven-day ferment of chilli and salt – then separating the chilli from the essence and serving separately. The shatta essence creates a colourful bed for the steak; bringing sweetness, roundness, and acidity – and on the side, the fermented chilli – mixed with toasted and cracked dill, coriander, and fennel seeds – allows the diner to build heat and spice to their preference,"

Remixed Roots

PUBS & CLUBS

The Beef Wellington has had quite a time in the spotlight – from high-end menus like The Grill at the International, and Sunday specials at the likes of the Botanist; to much more notorious news stories and high-profile court cases.

At the Eltham Hotel, the classic beef wellington gets a pub makeover with beef mince replacing eye fillet for an affordable pub special that ticks all the taste boxes.

Bonus Bite

KHANH NGUYEN

Chef Khanh Nguyen cooks from a place most can only imagine. Weaving notes of nostalgia through smell, taste and texture, Nguyen seamlessly blends global flavours and techniques with a distinctly Australian execution.

From the days of vegemite curry and roti at Sunda to his current Asian-inspired creations at King Clarence — Nguyen's food epitomises the concept of modern Australian dining quite unlike any other.

1. Lamb-belly dumplings with sweetbreads
2. Crumbed beef cheek with lemongrass, sunrise lime, Thai basil, betel leaf
3. Rostbiff larb with red nahm jim, Davidson plum, egg yolk, toasted sesame cracker, sticky coconut rice

2

3

1

Cut Consideration

- Beef cheek
- Beef rump tenders
- Tenderised topside
- Thin slice (topside, knuckle, rump)
- Tongue
- Asado/cross-cut ribs
- Korean-style short rib
- Mince

- Lamb neck
- Lamb belly
- Lamb cubes (skewers)
- Lamb ribs
- Sweetbreads
- Lamb Mince

In-Venue Activations

- Family Meal/Chef Special
  Bringing family meal into the dining room — chefs prepare and serve a dish that represents their background. Include storytelling about the chef, the dish origin and creative twist.

- Passport Plates
  A rotating menu concept focused on cultural mashups (e.g. Japanese x Mexican — birria ramen). Highlight chef's inspiration and how they have bridged the cuisines.

- The Traveller
  Hero one dish and how it is enjoyed around the world with a different version each week. For example, a sandwich that heroes a different cuisine or country each week — one dish, 52 versions.

Retail Refresh

- Develop a guide for cooking with Asian-style cuts of beef and lamb including ways of preparing and serving

- Partner with a key chef talent to launch a range of ready-meals or meal kits that showcase their heritage

- Offer a range of meal solutions through cross merchandising to try new cuisines and flavours with beef and lamb

Remixed Roots

“Modern Australian cuisine is quite multicultural — there's a lot of bits and pieces from here and there and I think it makes it unique in a way. For me when I write my menus, I always focus on traditional flavours, I love intense flavours from different parts of the world, but I try to approach it in a way that is understandable for the Australian diner.”

KHANH NGUYEN,EXECUTIVE CHEF, KING CLARENCE

“We say Cricca is an 'Italian-ish restaurant' because we don’t want to be bound by tradition. We like to cook food that inspires us and we don’t want to do the same thing over and over again. Like our beef tartare with putanesca flavours – it’s tartare but elevated by the flavours of putanesca while using some cool technique from the woodfire cooking to bring a balance of unexpected flavours.”

ALESSIO NOGAROTTO
CRICCA

82% of global consumers are interested in trying new foods or flavours [1]

82%

17.4 million people, or 65% of the total Australian population, are forecast to have travelled overseas by the end of 2025 – up from 11 million in 2010 [2]

17.4M

51% of Australians were either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas [3]

51%

[1] Mintel Global Consumer Food and Drink September 2023
[2] Fitch Solutions
[3] Fitch Solutions

3. The Main Event

When a dish becomes a destination — single focus restaurants and signature dishes.

“Big Don’s is mostly focused on brisket, and we are trying to take brisket to as good or better than you’d get in Texas. I went down a rabbit hole on brisket and I just wanted to cook it perfectly and now I’ve got a team of people who have probably surpassed me. The food is only one day a week because the workload to prep it is so intense — it’s not something you can pull out of a warmer, it must be served fresh. Quality in, quality out — we are serving expensive quality meat, and it shows on the other end.”

DONOVAN MCDONALD, BIG DON’S

3. The Main Event — Overview

IN A WORLD OF ENDLESS CHOICE, simplicity is becoming a statement. A growing wave of restaurants are narrowing their focus to one hero dish or format — executed with precision, elevated through branding, and celebrated for its consistency. These venues thrive by stripping back complexity and doubling down on craft, creating cult followings through clarity and mastery.

"The Main Event" is about confidence and commitment. From steak-frites to birria tacos, these concepts build their reputation on doing one thing exceptionally well. Every detail matters — sourcing, technique, plating, and storytelling — because when the menu is minimal, the execution must be flawless. Diners are responding to this approach with enthusiasm, drawn to the reassurance of expertise and the allure of a signature experience.

For Australian beef and lamb, this trend offers a powerful platform. Imagine a venue dedicated to the perfect dry-aged ribeye, or a modern lamb chop house where provenance and preparation take centre stage. These concepts allow red meat to shine in its purest form, supported by thoughtful sides and curated beverage pairings. It's about elevating the familiar into something iconic — a dish that becomes a destination.

Beyond fine dining, single-focus formats are thriving in premium casual and QSR spaces too. Think wagyu burger specialists, lamb skewer bars, or steak sandwich concepts that turn a classic into a cult favourite. For operators, this model delivers operational efficiency and brand clarity. For diners, it offers confidence, quality, and a sense of occasion — without overwhelming choice.

In 2026, less is more. The Main Event proves that focus, repetition, and refinement can create experiences that feel both simple and extraordinary — with Australian beef and lamb at the heart of the plate.

Key Drivers

- → *Decision fatigue — diners crave clarity with fewer choices and higher confidence*
- → *Operational efficiency of streamlined menus means lower costs, waste, and complexity*
- → *Experience economy — diners trust the venue that just does one thing and does it perfectly*

Liquid & Larder Group takes a laser focus on beef with three venues dedicated almost entirely to three cuts of steak — and another with one of the city's best burgers.

A central in-house wet and dry age facility and butcher facilitates all steak preparation for the venues — tbone's for Bistecca, sirloins for Alfie's, and ribeyes for The Gidley with all trim used to make the award-winning burger for The Gidley and The Rover.

Pictured here, the sirloin at Alfie's where the simple menu and quick service sees the venue serve up to 1,500 sirloins a week.

The Main Event

ON THE MENU

Ideas and inspiration for through-sector adoption

The Main Event

CUTTING EDGE CULINARY

At 20 Chapel in Marrickville the focus is on the whole carcase. Every four weeks, chef Corey Costelloe takes delivery of a full wagyu body and utilises it across his menu.

Prepared in-house, the team work their way through the body – taking skirts and fillets to hit the menu that day; dry- ageing select primals and cuts in their own tallow; brining and curing for charcuterie; preparing sausages, mince, and tallow; and discovering new cuts and muscles and how to use them.

On the menu, this comes to life with a variety of steak offerings (top image previous page) alongside dishes like house made bastourma (right); potato wedges cooked in beef tallow; handkerchief steak with smoked brown butter (bottom image previous page); white bolognese; merguez sausages; and 72 hour braised brisket.

The Main Event

FAST CASUAL

A food truck serving birria in a service station parking lot proved so popular that a second truck and a bricks and mortar location followed in quick succession.

16-hour slow braised beef brimming with Mexican spices is loaded into corn tortillas and served with consume for dipping at Papi's.

The Main Event

PUBS & CLUBS

At the Forester's in Surry Hills there is a full menu offering — but it's the Big Yorkie that steals the show. The signature dish includes a rotating roast of the week, gravy, roast potatoes, peas, and glazed carrots all nestled in a giant Yorkshire pudding. Our pick — obviously the lamb shoulder or beef brisket.

The Main Event

CONTEMPORARY DINING

When the Rockpool Group opens a new steak restaurant — everyone pays attention. At 24 York it's one thing only - signature steak frites; scotch fillet served with beef tallow fries and your choice of sauce. Simply satisfying.

The Main Event

GLOBAL TASTE

Founded in Japan by ramen master Tomoharu Shono, Mensho Co's specialty is Michelin-awarded ramen.

This spicy lamb soba "Mabetsuji" is a dry-style ramen dish with udon noodles. Shono uses Australian lamb offcuts to make the lamb sauce, concentrating gristle and trim into the sauce and serving with a spicy lamb mince. Mensho Co. has venues around the world including two in Australia in Melbourne and Sydney.

The Main Event

GLOBAL TASTE

Another Japanese specialty is Jingisukan (Genghis Khanh) – an official Hokkaido Heritage food that locals began eating around 1936. A traditional style of Japanese barbecue, you can choose marinated or non-marinated – but the use of lamb or mutton is essential.

Whilst popular at home, there are also over 200 Jingisukan restaurants in Sapporo alone. The custom skillets are sloped, allowing juices and fat to cook and flavour the vegetables while also dripping through onto coals for smoky flavour. Moriaki Higashizawa owns Toyo Meat (a sheepmeat specialty shop in Nayoro, Hokkaido) and is a Jingisukan specialist – here he breaks down an Australian lamb shoulder for Jingisukan.

Bonus Bite

EAT AT ROBS

A burger in a butcher shop? Some things just make perfect sense.

Eat At ROBs in Rozelle heroes the Oklahoma Smashed Fried Onion Cheeseburger where fresh ground beef is formed into patties, piled high with wafer-thin onion slices, smashed onto the grill, and served with American cheese on a potato roll. Served straight up; as a double; or make it ‘fancy’ with the addition of lettuce, pickles and ROBs sauce.

Those in the know might also order the off-menu Big ROB – no prizes for the inspo behind that one. Who is Rob you might ask? Well, it’s more a concept than a person – ROB standing for Rozelle Original Burger – and it is a concept that resonates; the tiny venue churns out upwards of 3,000 burgers a week.

Cut Consideration

- Bistecca
- Whole shin/Thor's Hammer
- Flat iron
- Short rib
- Rump cap
- Chuck
- Corned beef roll
- Veal cutlet

- Boneless lamb neck
- Forequarter rack
- Barnsley chop
- Lamb chump
- Easy carve leg or shoulder
- Knuckle roast

In-Venue Activations

- Signature Spotlight
  Dedicate a section of the menu to a signature dish and offer variations on the theme (different cuts, sauces, or sides) to keep it fresh while maintaining core concept.

- Cult Classic Collab
  Partner with another venue or chef known for a different signature dish to create a LTO mashup – eg. a steakhouse teams up with a taco bar for a wagyu-asado taco night.

- In or Out
  A signature dine-in experience with a takeaway-only hero – eg. a full-menu steakhouse sells premium beef sandwiches or lamb rolls for takeaway only during lunch hours.

Retail Refresh

- Create a dining experience in-store or in close proximity to store – think Bunnings Sausage Sizzle or Costco Hotdogs and even Eat at Robs – opportunity to try a new product that leads to instore purchase, provide seasonal offerings, collaborate with a foodservice partner, or to own a concept

- Mince Mondays (a concept chefs Matt Stone and Alanna Sapwell-Stone employ at home), Taco Tuesdays, Steak Saturdays – what is your main event opportunity; what concept, day, or occasion can you own?

The Main Event

> *"When you're only serving one dish, there's nowhere to hide — every element has to be spot on, every day. That's what I like about 24 York. It's simple, but the pressure sits in the details: the cut, the grill, the fries, the sauce. And people are really responding to it — we're doing around 3,000 steaks a week. It just proves you don't need a big menu when the one thing you do is done well."*

SANTIAGO ARISTIZABAL, EXECUTIVE CHEF, ROCKPOOL BAR & GRILL

“In Mexico, the most iconic eateries specialise in one dish – places that have perfected a single recipe over generations. We’re bringing that tradition to Australia: focusing on birria, doing it exceptionally well, and refining it every day through repetition, testing and constant improvement. The response has been incredible - from the get-go we’re selling over 500kg of birria every week, a clear sign that Sydney is ready for true Mexican specialty dining.”

ALDO LARA
CHEF/OWNER, RADIO TACO

60% of diners are more likely to become repeat customers when a restaurant offers a unique, standout item that aligns with its identity [1]

60%

One in six diners are prepared to pay between $98 and $291 per person when dining out, reflecting growing demand for premium, highly curated dining experiences [2]

$98-$291

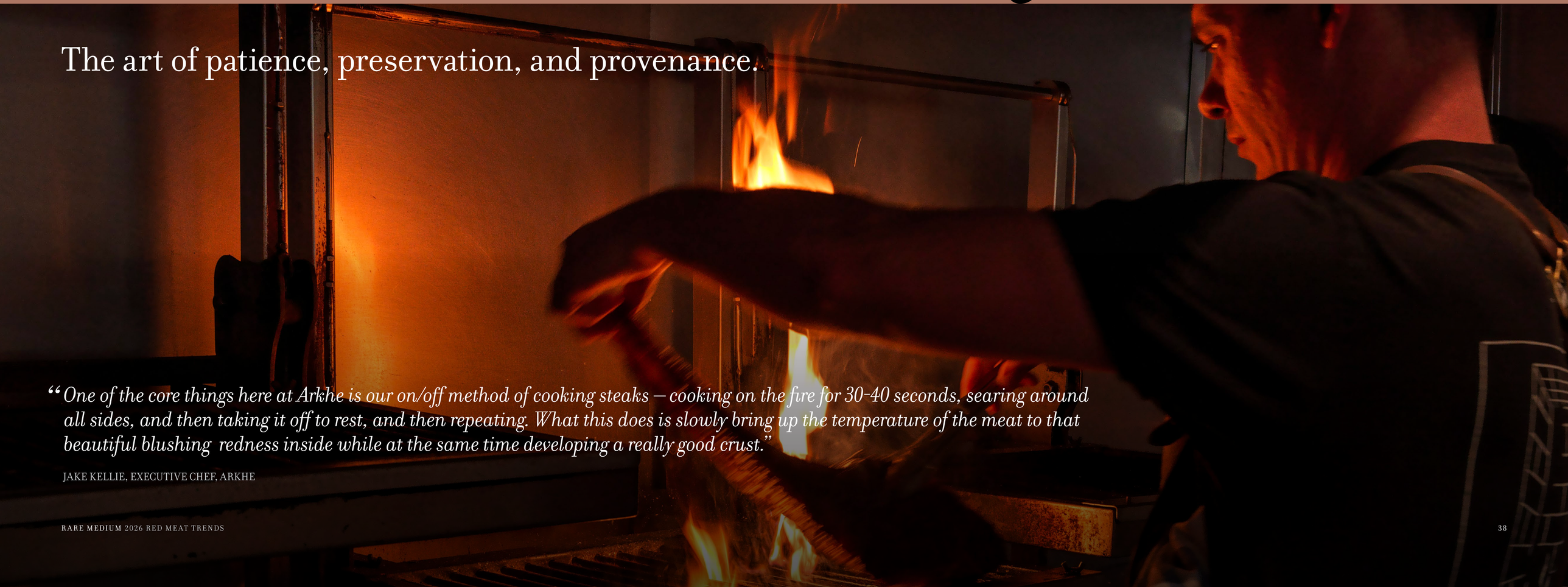
Diners make choices quickly – less than 2 mins per order – highlighting value of streamlined menus to simplify decisions and enhance satisfaction [3]

2 mins

[1] The Restaurant Times Sep 2025
[2] AccomNews Aug 2024
[3] Hint IT Feb 2025

4. Cured & Crafted

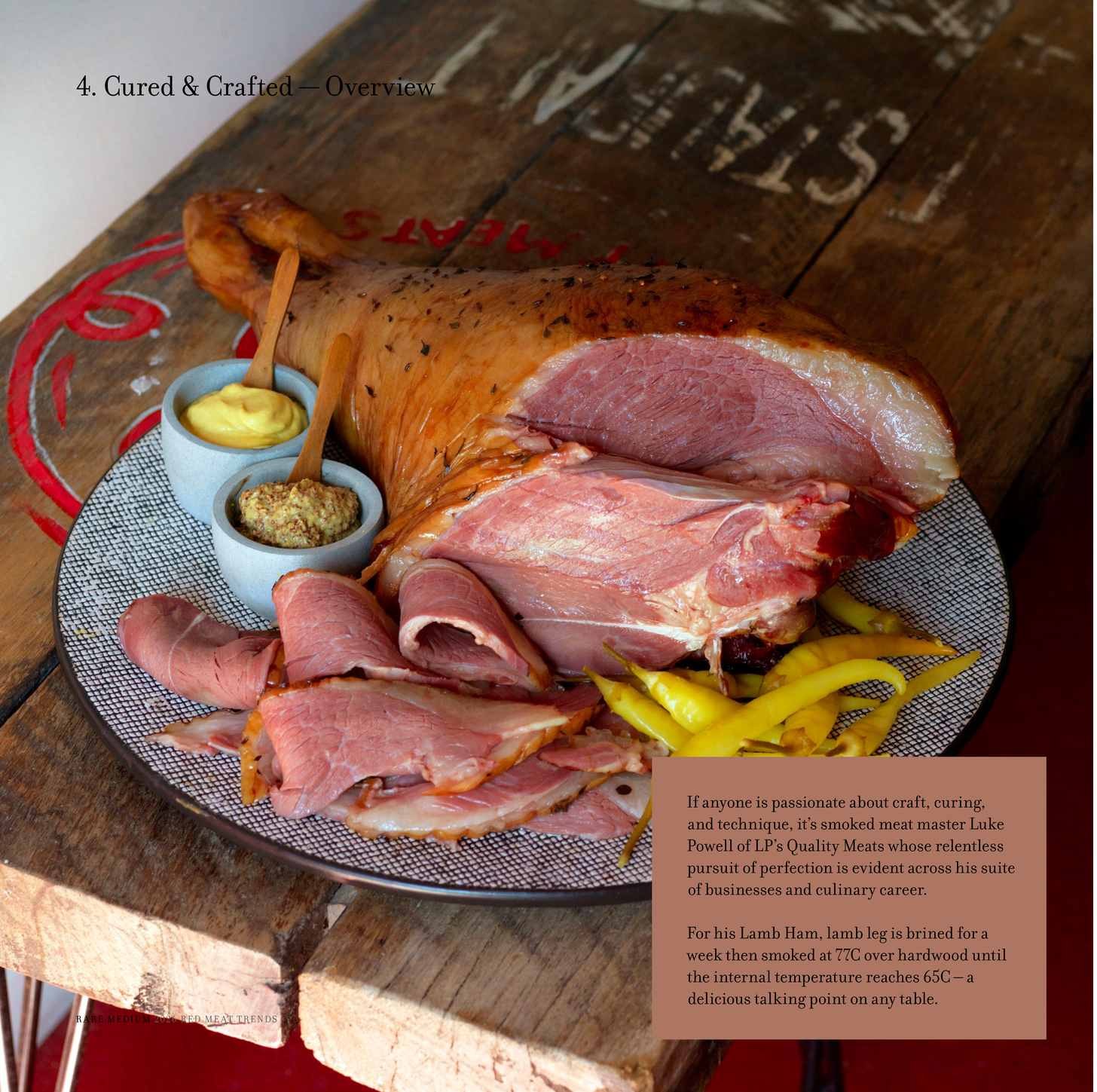
The art of patience, preservation, and provenance.



“One of the core things here at Arkhe is our on/off method of cooking steaks — cooking on the fire for 30-40 seconds, searing around all sides, and then taking it off to rest, and then repeating. What this does is slowly bring up the temperature of the meat to that beautiful blushing redness inside while at the same time developing a really good crust.”

JAKE KELLIE, EXECUTIVE CHEF, ARKHE

4. Cured & Crafted — Overview



If anyone is passionate about craft, curing, and technique, it's smoked meat master Luke Powell of LP's Quality Meats whose relentless pursuit of perfection is evident across his suite of businesses and culinary career.

For his Lamb Ham, lamb leg is brined for a week then smoked at 77C over hardwood until the internal temperature reaches 65C – a delicious talking point on any table.

IN A FAST-PACED DINING WORLD, the slow craft of curing and preservation is reclaiming its place as a marker of quality and care.

Cured & Crafted celebrates time-honoured techniques — salting, smoking, fermenting, and dry-ageing — as symbols of patience, skill, and provenance. These methods don't just preserve; they transform, unlocking layers of flavour and creating stories worth sharing.

Chefs are rediscovering the art of patience, using Australian beef and lamb to explore ancient traditions through a modern lens. From charcuterie boards featuring beef bresaola and lamb pancetta to house-made pastrami, nduja, and mortadella, these products elevate menus while offering inclusive alternatives for diners who avoid pork.

High-marbled beef becomes silky bresaola; lamb belly turns into pancetta; offcuts find new life in terrines and rillettes. Each piece reflects craft and creativity, while supporting whole-animal utilisation and reducing waste.

Beyond the plate, curing and ageing align with diners' growing appetite for authenticity and storytelling. Menus that highlight origin, ageing time, and artisanal technique create a sense of connection and premium value.

For operators, these products offer versatility — starring on grazing boards, bar menus, and retail shelves as shelf-stable, high-margin items. In 2026, patience is a luxury diners are willing to pay for.

Cured & Crafted reframes preservation as an art form, delivering flavour that lingers and stories that resonate — with Australian beef and lamb at the heart of this slow, deliberate celebration.

Key Drivers

- → *Wave of New Australians – increasing migrants enhances demand for meat products with non-pork origin*
- → *Old world heritage – preserved/cured meat has been a staple of many western countries, and represents cultural roots/tradition*
- → *Consumer attraction to small-batch, local provenance, and heritage techniques*

Cured & Crafted

ON THE MENU

Ideas and inspiration for through-sector adoption

Cured & Crafted

GLOBAL TASTE

Australian lamb has taken to the skies to give first and business class passengers on select Qantas international flights a taste of down under.

The Australian Tasting Plate heroes Margra lamb prosciutto alongside saltbush crusted goat's cheese, olives, and a piccalilli and bush tomato relish with pepperleaf and parmesan lavosh.

Sit back and watch the Margra documentary on Qantas In-Flight at the same time for the ultimate paddock to plane dining experience.

A selection of Margra's lamb charcuterie range pictured here and on previous page.

Cured & Crafted

FAST CASUAL

With 25 pizza stores peppered across Sydney, Johnny Gio's considers the dietary restrictions of popular pizza toppings like salami and provides accessible options like the Uncle Al's Hot Beef with beef salami, basil, hot honey.

Cured & Crafted

CUTTING EDGE CULINARY

The Bastourma Toast at Zareh started as an opening special but its popularity has seen it become a permanent menu item. Robin's Island Wagyu girello is first salted and cured, then brined in red wine, and hung to dry until it loses 33% of its weight. Next it is coated in chemen – a traditional spice mix of fenugreek, black pepper, cumin, paprika – with Aleppo pepper added for spice; and left to dry further.

The whole process takes about three months. For service, the bastourma is thinly sliced and draped over charcoal toasted seeded sourdough that has been loaded with fresh ricotta and goat's cheese, woodfired bullhorn peppers, dill, tarragon, chives, and basil.

Chef Tom Sarafian says the bastourma toast is fast becoming a favourite. "It's almost everything I love about Aremnian mezze at the start of the meal – you would usually have bread, cheese, herbs, peppers, bastourma – so we've put it all together into a couple of convenient bites."

Cured & Crafted

CONTEMPORARY DINING

The Mayura Station Signature Series Tomahawk is an absolute showstopper. The Mayura Station Wagyu are fed a unique diet that includes chocolate and lolly offcuts from the nearby Allen's factory.

At Arkhe, the story comes full circle with rib sets dipped in chocolate, smoked tallow, and whisky, and aged in-house for 40 days. Sliced to order and cooked over flames — this steak is the ultimate in craft from paddock to plate.

Cured & Crafted

PUBS & CLUBS

South Australia is the Aussie home of the schnitzel – boasting the country's most diverse range of schnitzels – both on menus and across venue types, and that's before you even get to all the topping options.

At the Coopers Ale House in Adelaide, the only venue boasting the full Coopers selection on tap, you find this beauty – a 500g MSA porterhouse schnitzel; or opt for the 300g version for just $15 on Wednesdays when the pub sells over 300.

If schnitzel isn't your thing, the pub also boasts an in-house dry ageing program with select cuts and primals dry-aged for at least four weeks.

Bonus Bite

BIG DON'S

At Big Don's it's all about the one percenters and it shows. Open just one day a week there are no shortcuts here, only long, slow cooks. The menu is announced Monday with orders going live (and selling out in minutes) at 7pm Tuesday – up to 2,500kg of meat is then prepared across the week for a single Saturday service.

Tuesday sees 1,000kg of brisket trimmed and seasoned; then 500-800 sausages are handmade from brisket trim on Wednesday. On Thursday, sausages are cold smoked, steaks are prepped, and any pre-cooked meats like lamb ribs are prepared. Friday is brisket cook day – taking 12-14 hours of specialist care to ensure only the best brisket is served week to week.

Saturday is game day with 800 guests lining up to collect pre-ordered barbecue – sliced hot and fresh on pick up and presented on platters quite unlike any other. Big Don's unwavering commitment to the craft of barbecue should not be underestimated with many, including us, claiming this is not only some of the best barbecue in Australia, but the world.

Cut Consideration

- Chuck eye for coppa
- Sirloin for bresaola
- Eye round for pastrami
- Navel or brisket for bacon
- Oyster blade or chuck tender (smoked)
- Beef trim for mortadella and salami
- Outside flat for biltong

- Lamb leg for prosciutto
- Lamb belly for pancetta
- Lamb shoulder for coppa
- Lamb breast for bacon
- Lamb leg for ham

In-Venue Activations

- High & Dry Night
  Top shelf drink and dry-aged cut meal deals early in the week to encourage weekday dining experiences at an affordable price point

- Crafty Couplings
  House-made beef and lamb charcuterie boards paired with local wines, craft beers, or spirits. Tasting notes and stories elevate the experience

- Smokehouse Sundays
  Smoked and cured specialties like smoked lamb ribs or pastrami-beef-cheek paired with other smoked goods like cheeses, cocktails, desserts

Retail Refresh

- Expand crumbed range to include options outside of chicken for schnitzels, nuggets, tenders etc

- Offer alternate Grab & Go smoked/ bbq specials like smoked lamb shank, low and slow beef shin – ready to shred across a range of meals

- Special non-pork products offer more diversity and inclusion during peak holiday seasons – lamb leg hams and beef bacons for example

“More chefs, hotels and airlines are moving towards Australian beef and lamb charcuterie because provenance and craft matter. Local products bring a depth of flavour and authenticity that diners respond to, and our smoked Wagyu beef has become a standout hero as premium deli-style sandwiches return to the spotlight.”

SAREE BOUTROS, NATIONAL SALES AND MARKETING MANAGER, FETTAYLEH FOODS

“It’s a bit like a wine; you can quite happily have it fresh and it’s a perfectly good steak but it’s what happens during that extensive ageing process, that takes over 250 days, which allows it to become something else. It’s that transformation, the hand selection of the beef, the quality of the producer – it can’t fall down at the last minute. It must then be cut to order on a bandsaw, trimmed to order, cooked over a woodfire to get that crust on the beef and that flavour, and then just really good salt.”

LENNOX HASTIE
EXECUTIVE CHEF, FIREDOOR

In 2024, the global value of cured meat sales was around US$29Bn, forecast to grow at a CAGR of 2.9% out to 2029 to reach US$33.4Bn. The segment is forecast to continue to grow globally and expected to be strongest in the Africa, Australasia and Asia regions [1]

$29B

Approximately 9.2% of Australians avoid food for religious, cultural, or ethical reasons [2]

9.2%

74% of Australians have either returned to a restaurant after a unique experience or plan to [3]

74%

[1] GlobalData Market Analyzer
[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023
[3] SevenRooms 2025 Australia Restaurant Industry Trends

5. Living Luxe

Affordable indulgence in a two-speed economy.

"We've built a very important network of growers to make sure that when we have a steak here, we know the farm it came from, how it was raised, how it was looked after. We are buying whole bodies, we're dry-ageing — I am out at the dry ageing room every week, I'm talking to the butchers as they're cutting the beef. We have a fantastic beef industry here in Australia — without great beef you can't have a great steak."

NEIL PERRY, EXECUTIVE CHEF, MARGARET

5. Living Luxe — Overview

LUXURY IS EVOLVING. It's no longer defined by extravagance or exclusivity — it's about attainable indulgence, craftsmanship, and the art of elevating everyday moments. In a two-speed economy, diners are seeking experiences that feel special without the formality or price tag of fine dining. They want quality, provenance, and a sense of occasion — delivered in ways that feel accessible and rewarding.

"Living Luxe" taps into this desire for premium without pretension. Think high-touch details, thoughtful sourcing, and dishes that showcase skill and care. For Australian beef and lamb, this trend opens the door to premium cuts and techniques that transform a simple meal into something memorable. Dry-aged steaks, high-marbled lamb products, and refined comfort dishes — like slow-braised beef cheeks or lamb shoulder ragù — deliver indulgence through flavour, texture, and story rather than extravagance.

Premium casual dining is on the rise, offering steakhouse-quality experiences in relaxed settings. At-home dining is also getting an upgrade, with butcher's specials, curated meat boxes, and chef-inspired meal kits bringing luxury into everyday kitchens. These formats allow diners to treat themselves without breaking the bank — a small splurge that feels justified and joyful.

For chefs and operators, "Living Luxe" is about balancing aspiration with accessibility. It's an opportunity to showcase craft, celebrate provenance, and create dishes that feel indulgent yet approachable. For diners, it's the reassurance that luxury isn't out of reach — it's right here, in the details, on the plate.

Affordable indulgence is the new luxury — and Australian beef and lamb are perfectly positioned to lead the way.

Key Drivers

- → *Two-speed economy: consumers trade down daily but splurge occasionally on experiences and premium foods*
- → *Luxury is being redefined as quality + provenance + ethics in place of just premium price*
- → *Desire for shareable, Instagrammable "treat" moments*

In 2025, Sydney was crowned the World's Best Steak City with 11 venues listed on the World's 101 Best Steak Restaurants list — five of which were ranked in the top 20.

More broadly, Australia claimed 17 spots on the coveted list with Neil Perry's Margaret the highest ranked Australian venue — a remarkable number two in the world. The incredible achievement is testament to our Australian beef producers and is a masterclass in culinary craftsmanship, showcasing how Australian beef elevates the dining experience at every level.

Living Luxe

ON THE MENU

Ideas and inspiration for through-sector adoption

Living Luxe

CONTEMPORARY DINING

At Bouillion L'Entrecote you can have your steak and eat it too – with frites in a baguette! Slices of tender marble score 9+ wagyu topside are layered inside a baguette stuffed with crispy skin-on fries and a secret green sauce.

Living Luxe

FAST CASUAL

What started as a pop-up pastry shop at LuMi during lockdown soon became a Sydney foodie essential — leading to Federico Zanelatto opening his fourth Lode store in November. The new location offers up cult pies and pastries alongside a selection of breads, coffee, and a full-service café.

The best-selling Wagyu & Mushroom Pie takes three days to make with around 700 heading out the door every week. Fast service perhaps — but at its heart, Lode is all about slow, technical cooking using only the finest ingredients the team can source including the entire Sydney allocation of Blackmore wagyu shin.

Living Luxe

CUTTING EDGE CULINARY

Offering the ultimate indulgence, Aria is one of the first restaurants in the world to offer KS7 (the world's first marble score 7+ lamb brand) on menu. Here head chef Tom Gorridge pairs KS7 roasted lamb loin with sweetbreads, artichoke, and fermented mint.

Living Luxe

PUBS & CLUBS

Magma is not your average club feed — but Cabravale Club Resort isn't your average club. Formerly Cabra-Vale Diggers, Cabravale Club Resort offers entertainment, dining, and luxury hotel facilities in Sydney's South-West.

One of those dining experiences is Dany Karam's Magma where fire meets only the finest produce — including whole carcases of the exclusive Blackmore Rhone that are dry-aged in house with select cuts served at their peak.

Living Luxe

GLOBAL TASTE

In Ho Chi Min city Vietnam, chef Francis Thuan has opened his debut restaurant Nephele to international acclaim. Part of a degustation menu, his Sichuan-style lamb dish uses Australian lamb saddle deconstructed into different muscles for the plate.

Meanwhile, chef Bin Dai of the ROSSO Hotel in Hangzhou China, uses Australian lamb to serve a riff on the classic beef wellington. Here, Dai wraps lamb tenderloin with tooth fish, mushroom duxelles, and spinach leaf in puff pastry to serve a little luxury – with foie gras sauce.

Bonus Bite

LUXURY LAMB

Australia is leading the world in the luxury lamb space with world-first objective measurement technologies; purpose developed breeds; and scientific discovery. Already a premium product, Australian lamb is revered around the world – but an industry hungry for constant innovation and improvement has seen the emergence of a class of premium, high-marbled lamb product not seen before at scale.

In September 2025, Kinross Station launched a world-first lamb product graded at 7% intramuscular fat (IMF) and above – aptly named KS7. KS7 is based on elite genetic selection, targeted breeding for intramuscular fat traits, precision feeding systems, and advanced objective measurement technologies. KS7's IMF delivers a luxurious mouthfeel, superior juiciness, and depth of flavour that rivals the best cuts of beef, making it ideal for premium dining experiences.

Gundagai Lamb's GLQ5+ product takes a similar vein – objectively measuring and grading locally sourced lambs into good, better, or best through an automated processing facility. Here, the 'best' lambs present with optimum characteristics across a variety of measures including weight, lean meat to fat ratio, intramuscular fat percentage, and overall animal health. Gundagai Lamb's state of the art facility also stamps each box of GLQ5+ with a unique QR code providing on the spot traceability and verified details right back to the farm of origin.

Margra, another brand in the luxury lamb space, pins its point of difference to the unique attributes of the Australian White – a sheep breed custom developed by the team at Margra. With a low melting point, the fat is a key characteristic and its mirco marbling nature means that the dispersal of the fat within the muscle is uniform and retained during cooking. The breed's high levels of omega three long chain fatty acids, particularly oleic acid, result in juiciness and a unique flavour. Luxury lamb is not a gimmick but the result of decades of commitment and dedication – demonstrating innovation at its highest level and elevating lamb to new heights.

Cut Consideration

- Standing rib roast
- Bistecca/T-Bone
- Picanha/Rump cap
- High marble scored Wagyu secondary cuts (eg. chuck,bolar, oyster, topside)
- Denver and Delmonico
- Veal cottoletta

- Double Barnsley chop
- Lamb saddle
- Lamb sirloin (fat on)
- Lamb tomahawk
- Square cut shoulder
- High marbled lamb

In-Venue Activations

- Pimp My Plate
  A range of additions or add ons for guests to build their version of luxury from a standard offering – upgrade from steak to dry-aged steak; or add premium accompaniments.

- A Little Luxury
  Pair small portions of a premium cut or dish with curated wines or craft cocktails. Smoked wagyu tartare with a smoked cocktail; a single cutlet with a glass of Chianti; or a wagyu skewer with crisp, dry martini.

- YOLO
  A LTO dish, set menu or event for diners to treat themselves. A curated selection of indulgent, attainable luxury, a treat without the guilt. "Life's short, order the luxury lamb."

Retail Refresh

- Explore new takes on premium value add dishes that elevate the everyday – Glazed Lamb Long Leg, Lamb Wellington, Veal Cordon Bleu, Cutlet Crown, Pastrami Short Ribs, Wagyu Round Roulade

- Launch an exclusive Meat Members Only club – members get access to exclusive and limited time premium products like dry-age releases, unique cuts, product trials, events, launches etc

- A range of sous-vide ready products – premium cuts accompanied by gourmet butters/oils sealed and ready to go – no touch cooking with perfect results

> *"I like to pair high-end ingredients like lamb or wagyu with something more familiar, that hi-lo effect. Our Aussie lamb pastrami sliders for instance – it's like the best pastrami sandwich you've ever had but taken up a level with lamb pastrami. You're pairing the comfortable and familiar with the upscale, and that really works, especially with millennial-age guests."*
>
> CHEF ASHFER BIJU, BACCARAT HOTEL, NEW YORK

“Aussie lamb does really well for us, it has built-in luxury appeal. My guests know Australian lamb is going to be excellent quality and milder in flavour; and it opens up all these storylines at the table. It feels exclusive, and that’s a key part of luxury too.”

CHEF ALEX ESPINOZA
BOTTEGA, NAPA VALLEY

41% of Australians were "Worse Off” in 2025 but 56% were “living comfortably“ and 9% were able to “spend freely” [1]

56%

60% of Australian consumers are worried about rising prices, but 16% of those consumers plan to keep splurging – with Gen Z consumers more willing to splurge than other age groups [2]

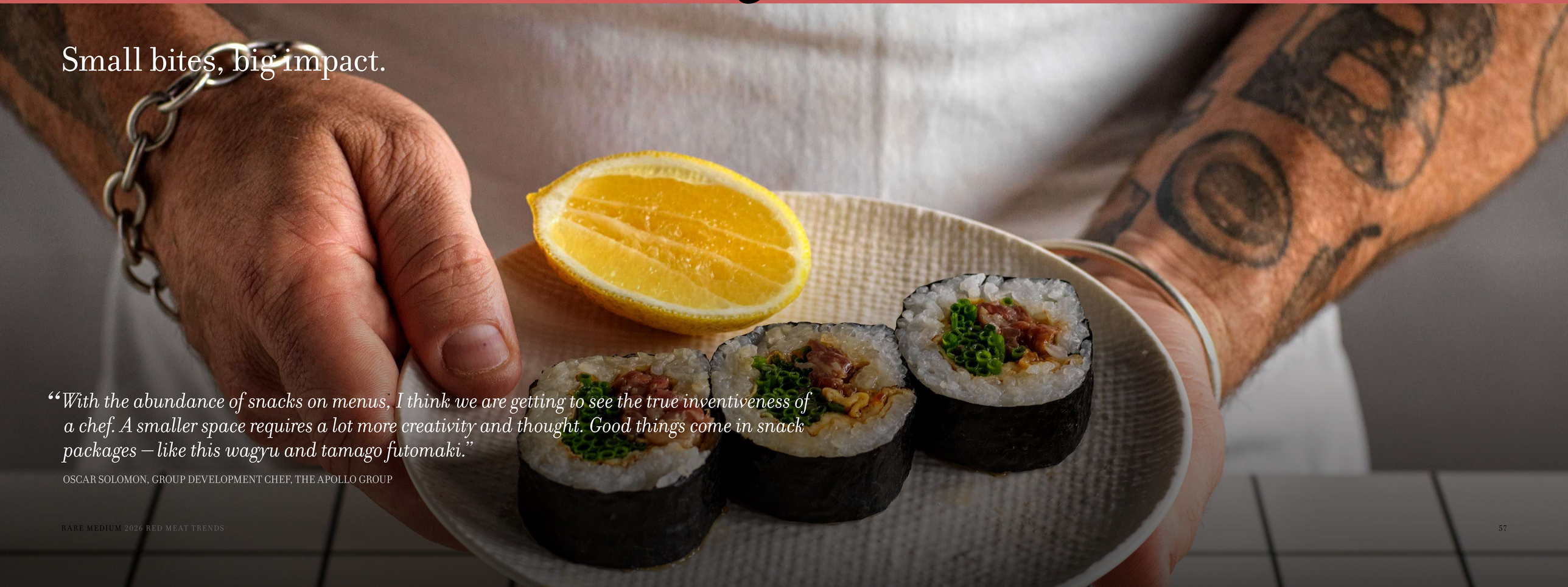
60%

55% of consumers want personalised restaurant perks for special occasions while 89% of diners would sign up for restaurant marketing for exclusive offers [3]

89%

[1] NIQ 2025 Private Label & Branded Products report global survey
[2] State of the Consumer trends report 2025 | McKinsey
[3] State of the Consumer trends report 2025 | McKinsey

6. Stacks of Snacks



Small bites, big impact.

“With the abundance of snacks on menus, I think we are getting to see the true inventiveness of a chef. A smaller space requires a lot more creativity and thought. Good things come in snack packages — like this wagyu and tamago futomaki.”

OSCAR SOLOMON, GROUP DEVELOPMENT CHEF, THE APOLLO GROUP

Chef Nicolas Hill of Porcine has had quite the year winning the prestigious Golden Knife at the Bocuse d'Or Australia in May 2025 and Gourmet Traveller's 2025 Chef of the Year.

Nik embodies many of our 2026 Sizzling Six – particularly his nose to tail cooking approach, little touches of luxury, his considered craft and technical cooking, and of course his saucy snacks like this Roast on Toast. Veal oyster blade is roasted then served cold with smoked bone marrow toast and horseradish cream served in the bone.

6. Stacks of Snacks — Overview

MENUS ARE LEANING INTO GRAZING — snack-sized portions, shared plates, and bar bites designed for flexible, social dining. This trend reflects how people want to eat now: less formality, more freedom, and flavours that pack a punch in every bite. It's about creating experiences that feel playful, approachable, and shareable.

Snackable formats are booming across foodservice – think sliders, skewers, croquettes, empanadas, mini pies, and handheld bites that invite interaction and conversation.

For Australian beef and lamb, this is a golden opportunity to shine in formats that are bold, fun, and flavour-forward. Lamb ribs glazed with native spices, beef skewers with global marinades, or wagyu sliders with inventive toppings — these dishes deliver impact without the commitment of a full plate.

Beyond the restaurant, snack culture is thriving in retail too. Protein-rich snacks like jerky, biltong, and steak chips align with consumer interest in wellness, convenience, and high-quality ingredients. These products tap into the growing demand for functional, on-the-go options that feel indulgent yet purposeful.

For chefs, "Stacks of Snacks" is a creative playground — a chance to experiment with cuts, textures, and global influences in bite-sized form. For operators, it offers versatility: snacks can drive bar sales, fit into tasting menus, or become signature items for social dining concepts. And for diners, it's all about choice, variety, and the joy of grazing.

Small bites, big impact — this trend proves that sometimes less really is more.

Key Drivers

- → *Snacking culture and meet-up dining rising; consumers value variety and lower per-item spend*
- → *Cost-sensitive diners choose shareables to control spend while enjoying premium ingredients*
- → *Growing interest in health and wellness — particularly in the protein space*

Stacks of Snacks

ON THE MENU

Ideas and inspiration for through-sector adoption

Stacks of Snacks

CUTTING EDGE CULINARY

Chef Hugh Allen's newly opened restaurant Yiaga serves a 12-15 course degustation over a three- hour sitting — now that's a lot of snacks. The opening menu includes a dish utilising 14-year-old retired wagyu cow. The meat is lightly salt- cured then draped over a bite-sized steam bun and finished with green ants and wild garlic capers.

Lamb snack pack at Hayat Turkish Cuisine in Merrylands (Above)
Lamb snack pack at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (Left)

Stacks of Snacks

FAST CASUAL

It would be remiss of us to put together a trend all about snacks and not include the humble Aussie kebab shop staple – the snack pack. Kebab meat shaved from the spit and piled over hot chips with cheese and a choice of sauces – what's not to love?

Whilst not by any means new, the snack pack as a concept is one that has largely remained the same – but could we push boundaries in this space? Thinking about chips as a base for meaty toppings – there's also poutine, spicebag, kapsalon, salchipapas, makkaraperunat, picado, and chorrillana to name a few. At the end of the day, chips and meat are a culinary staple – earlier in this document we spoke to the rise of steak frites restaurants and even a steak frites sandwich, so surely the snack pack deserves a look too.

From a fast service perspective, it makes complete sense – slow cooked or rotisserie beef or lamb at the ready, a quick fry of the chips (in beef tallow) and we are locked and loaded, pardon the pun.

Is the snack pack an opportunity that could easily encapsulate all the inspiration and insights of the Sizzling Six? A variety of cuts could be considered (trend 1); endless cuisines and flavour profiles could be applied (trend 2); a dedicated outlet or signature dish (trend 3): use a selection of cured artisan toppings like wagyu bacon or lamb pastrami (trend 4); a luxury take on loaded fries using premium produce and toppings (trend 5); and, back here in the snack section (trend 6).

Stacks of Snacks

GLOBAL TASTE

In Taipei Taiwan, there is a unique meat focussed dining experience called BAH! – a restaurant in a butcher shop, known for high quality and dry-aged cuts of meat. Here, chef Carlos Abreu marinates Australian ox-tail in onion, garlic and paprika, then braises, skewers, and pairs with chestnut puree.

Chef Isaac Tan from Bedrock Grill in Singapore brings new life to a perennial Aussie favourite – avocado toast. Tender, rich Australian wagyu oyster blade is delicately hay-smoked and heaped atop creamy slices of avocado on grilled dark rye sourdough and finished with finger lime. Avo on toast eat your heart out.

Stacks of Snacks

CONTEMPORARY DINING

KIIN is chef Ben Bertei's take on Thai cuisine - presented in a contemporary Australian format. The staff favourite is the Red Curry Cheeseburger Sliders — a brisket and chuck patty is mixed with housemade red curry paste and sandwiched on a custom bun with provolone cheese, pickles, and crispy fried onions.

Stacks of Snacks

PUBS & CLUBS

Cru Bar & Cellar in Brisbane boasts an exceptional Australian wine list and a diverse menu offering a range of steaks and lesser-known cuts. Here, wagyu intercostals are slowly braised then crumbed and fried like little nuggets — a perfect bar snack at any time of the day or night.

Bonus Bite

BRISKET CHIPS

It's 2026 and the protein-steaks are higher than ever. Retail shelves are overflowing with "protein-packed" options from bars and powders to yoghurts and even waters. Protein is the macronutrient of the moment, and that is something that beef and lamb do very, very well — naturally.

Nutrient dense "real" protein options like Chief Bars, Barbell Biltong, and The Jerky Co are becoming more readily available alongside boutique offerings like Field to Fork's Naked Biltong.

Taking inspiration from UK brand Mason's Meats — Marcus at Whole Beast Butchery developed these Brisket Chips — something we anticipate seeing much more of. Here Marcus par-froze brisket then sliced thinly, salted and dehydrated. Simple. Satisfying. And, oh so tasty. Today it was brisket — but the opportunities for Steak Chips is endless.

Cut Consideration

- Rump cap tataki
- Silverside biltong
- Crumbed intercostal tenders
- Pastrami tongue
- Tallow popcorn
- Beef lollipops (braised beef, shaped, crisped, glazed on a skewer)

- Lamb makanek
- Lamb riblettes
- Lamb biltong
- Lamb shoulder croquettes
- Lamb offal skewers
- Lamb belly burnt ends

In-Venue Activations

- Snack & Sip
  Bite-sized beef and lamb snacks paired with matching drinks for a tasting experience. Perfect for bars and casual dining venues.

- Snacky Hour
  A dedicated snack menu for happy hour featuring small-format dishes at approachable prices. Lamb riblets with smoky glaze, beef tartare on crisp crackers, mini meat pies.

- Pro-tinis
  Functional snacks that appeal to wellness-focused diners – high-protein, low-carb, nutrient-dense. High-protein beef and lamb bites that address popular diets. Pair with 'healthier' versions of cocktails, mocktails, kombuchas etc.

Retail Refresh

- Ramp up red meat offerings for busy parents/ kids – frozen beef nuggets, lamb fingers, beef chips

- Red meat is a naturally superior protein choice – increase snack selection with fresh biltong, steak chips, lamb sticks etc

- Grab & Go pre-packed snacks range offering high-protein wellness solutions eg. beef bresaola + roasted nuts + dried native fruits; biltong + dip; roast beef + boiled egg + veggie sticks

Stacks Of Snacks

“ Snack bite dishes let me offer big bold flavours in a relaxed format. We serve an Aussie Wagyu Eye Round Tartlet, using the cut smoked as a whole piece. The deep smokiness and clear beef flavour unfold instantly in a single bite, delivering the bold and memorable experience that defines the snack bite format.”

NAMNO YOON, HEAD CHEF AT DEEPIN, SEOUL SOUTH KOREA

“Snacks are the perfect way to ease your guests into a meal while also increasing spend per head – it is easier at the moment to sell multiple smaller, cheaper options than to push the big-ticket menu items. From tasty offals like tongue and sweetbreads to riffs on classics like tartare – there are so many options to use red meat for flavour bomb snacks.”

MITCH ORR, CULINARY DIRECTOR, THE PALOMAR

Snacking accounts for 14% of total food service spend up 4% year on year [1]

14%

Snacking occasions represent just under one third of eating occasions [2]

1/3

Among Australians increasing red meat consumption, 87% cite health and nutrition reasons with protein leading at 58% [3]

87%

[1] Circana consumer trends report MAT June 2025
[2] MLA Consumer Protein Landscape 2022
[3] MLA Community Sentiment Research 2025

MACRO TRENDS SHAPING MENUS AND INFLUENCING DINERS

There are many factors both domestic and global shaping how Australian consumers behave as we move into 2026. These in turn have direct impact on the how, when, what, and where of dining out.

In this resource, we have identified four macro forces that we see to be particularly influential for the industry in the year ahead, providing key insights to give you a more complete picture as you plan and prioritse business initiatives for 2026 and beyond.

01 AUSTRALIA'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY

Australia's population shape is growing and changing in composition — different household structures are emerging with different wants and needs, and we are much more ethnically diverse.

WE ARE GROWING

Current population of 27.5M is forecast to grow to 37.1M by 2050

AU Govt Home Affairs Research & Stats Migration trends ABS Census 2019, 2021, 2023; CALD /Migration trends

WE ARE AGEING

36% of the population will be 50+ by 2062

Intergenerational Report, Treasury, 2024

WE ARE CHANGING

76% of our 1.8% population growth from 2024-2025 was from migration

ABS census 2021, 2025 estimates, RBA Snapshot Sep 2025

WE ARE DIVERSIFYING

Asians are projected to compose 25% of the population by 2035

Intergenerational Report, Treasury, 2024

WE ARE VIBING

Gen Z is set to become the largest population cohort by 2035 with 6.5 million individuals

ABS Population clock and pyramid — by age group | Age in 2025

02 ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Rising prices are the new normal and the majority of Australians are just trying to get by – recent inflation has eased but disposable income erosion remains.

INFLATION VS WAGES

Inflation grew 22.7% for the period 2021-2025 whilst wages grew 14.4%

Macrobusiness 2025; ABS 2025

COST OF LIVING

74% of Australians view COL as their main concern while 55% of Australians feel financially insecure

KPMG 2025; NAB consumer Sentiment, 2025

MIND THE GAP

There is a widening gap between haves and have nots with 27% struggling and concerned and 25% coasting with no sacrifices to lifestyle

Nature pulse survey. Consumer concern with cost of living. Base: n=600 Australians, Mar 2025 cf Mar 2023

THE GOLDEN YEARS

Over 60s increased spending by more than inflation on both essentials +11% and discretionary goods +12.1%

Intergenerational Report, Treasury, 2024

03 PROTEIN POWERHOUSE

High quality protein is in demand and has emerged as the most sought-after health marker consumers are seeking. Australian red meat is the most natural, complete, and trusted source of protein.

SEEK & FIND

In Australia, "high protein" receives approximately 21,000 Google searches per month while "easy high protein meals" have seen a 40% increase in recent search activity

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-26/what-foods-and-recipes-are-high-in-protein/105318830

WELLNESS WARRIORS

58% of people eating more red meat choose to do so because of its protein credentials

Pollinate 2025. Base: Those eating more red meat (Jun'25 n=337)

BIG BUSINESS

Australia's animal protein exports (including dairy) are worth over $21 billion per year

https://www.csiro.au/en/work-with-us/services/consultancy-strategic-advice-services/CSIRO-futures/Agriculture-and-Food/Australias-Protein-Roadmap

HASHTAG HEALTH

As of November 2025 there are 30.5M #protein posts on Instagram and 2.5M on TikTok

04 SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

There is rising trust in the Australian red meat industry supported by positive views on sustainability. The majority of consumers trust and feel positive towards the industry – but they are unwilling to pay more for the privilege.

TRUST IN US

67% of consumers trust that the red meat industry is doing the right thing – up from 64% in 2024

MLA Consumer Sentiment Research (2025)

TOP PRIORITY

94% of consumers perceive sustainability as important, with 67% seeing it as a Government responsibility through policy and regulation

MLA Consumer Sentiment Research (2025), NIQ From Value to Values (2025)

BUT FIRST, PRICE

Despite importance of sustainability, 86% of consumers say price is the number one driver of purchasing decisions with only 11% driven by sustainability claims and messages

Packaging Research (2024), KPMG Australian Retail Outlook (2025)

DID YOU KNOW

As at 2023 net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the red meat & livestock industry had fallen by 70.2% since 2005

National Inventory Report 2023, Volume 1 (dcceew.gov.au)

FOUR BONUS FLAVOUR BOMBS

No waste, all taste — these recipes use upcycled ingredients to unlock new levels of flavour, and are the perfect complement for Australian beef, lamb, goat and veal products. Thanks to The Aussie Meat Academy and Flashpoint Innovation for the recipes.

01
Beef Bacon Aminos

02
Tokyo Deli Seasoning

03
Black Eggplant Caramel

04
Aged Kimchi Balsamic

BEEF BACON AMINOS

Wagyu beef bacon is cooked and crushed before joining a bath of coconut aminos for a long infusion.

By extracting flavour into the aminos, you produce a sauce that is easily applied to a multitude of dishes, with very little quantity needed to be effective.

INGREDIENTS

- 450g Australian Wagyu beef bacon, roasted and chopped
- 2 ½ cups (590 ml) coconut aminos

DIRECTIONS — SOUS-VIDE METHOD

1. Heat a water bath using an immersion circulator to 60C
2. Combine ingredients in a sous-vide bag and seal under full vacuum
3. Cook in the water bath for 12–24 hours, then strain through a fine chinois or muslin cloth pressing bacon to maximise yield
4. Refrigerate for up to 14 days or freeze in an airtight container for longer storage

DIRECTIONS — STOVE-TOP METHOD

1. Bring roasted bacon and coconut aminos to a gentle simmer over low heat
2. Adjust heat to keep the contents just below a simmer, then cover with a tight-fitting lid or aluminum foil
3. Allow the ingredients to meld together and infuse for 1-2 hours (or longer as desired)
4. Periodically check for evaporation, adding stock or purified water or as needed to maintain the original volume of liquid
5. When the bacon has infused into the aminos and the flavor of the liquid is to your liking, strain through a fine chinois or muslin cloth pressing bacon to maximise yield
6. Refrigerate for up to 14 days or freeze in an airtight container for longer storage

Chef's Notes

1. This recipe is in its simplest form — once you're comfortable with the process, customise with herbs, caramelised onions, cooked mirepoix, garlic, or toasted spices. Keep a ratio of about 450g of solid aromatics 590 ml of coconut aminos to maintain the intended yield.
2. This recipe uses coconut aminos for slightly sweet flavor with moderate saltiness. You can substitute other amino sauces, such as soy or wheat-based varieties, following the same process.
3. For the greatest aromatic impact, use this sauce as a finishing touch or add it late in cooking. Adding it too early may reduce the intensity of its aroma in the final dish.
4. If you wish to remove rendered bacon fat, chill the strained mixture until the fat solidifies, then skim or strain it off. Note that a small amount of fat can enhance the overall beef flavor in the sauce, so consider leaving some to incorporate when reheating.

TOKYO DELI SEASONING

A versatile savoury seasoning using furikake, everything bagel seasoning, and leftover onion peels for the easy application of texture, seasoning, and flavor.

Using vegetable trim, in the form of onion scraps and peels, to create a unique seasoning distinct from store-bought options while making use of what would otherwise be waste.

INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup (50g) nori komi furikake, lightly toasted
- 2/3 cup (190g) everything bagel seasoning, toasted
- 2/3 cup (50g) dehydrated onion trim and skin, toasted and flaked

DIRECTIONS

1. Bring together ingredients in a bowl
2. Break up or remove any overly large pieces of vegetable trim
3. Store in an airtight container in a cool and dark place. This mix will keep for weeks or months in an airtight container or longer if stored in a freezer.

Chef's Notes

1. Substitute nori komi furikake for any variety of furikake. The nori komi blend is one of the simplest and as a result, one of the most versatile.
2. Ensure all ingredients are toasted and dry. If the vegetable trim has residual moisture, bake or dehydrate it until fully dry.
3. Adding furikake, bagel seasoning, or vegetable trim that is not already dry and crispy will result in moisture migration. The result will be a seasoning blend that feels stale in texture and is not as crispy as it could be.

BLACK EGGPLANT CARAMEL

A savoury caramel to enhance grilled meats and Vegetables – it is more like a low-acid BBQ sauce than a sweet confection.

Use it to build a caramelised layer on smoked meats, grilled steaks, or charred vegetables. Brushing thin layers onto meats as they grill creates a surface that captures smoke and char from the coals or flames.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large purple eggplant (500g)
- 400g dulce de leche or salted caramel
- 225g caramelised onions
- ¼ cup (60ml) smoked soy sauce or smoked coconut aminos, optional
- ½ cup (120ml) black garlic flesh, optional

DIRECTIONS

1. Roast or grill the eggplant until the exterior is deeply charred.

2. Ensure the interior of the eggplant is tender and fully cooked.

3. Combine charred eggplant with remaining ingredients in a high-speed blender. Blend on LOW to incorporate, then gradually increase speed to MEDIUM and finally HIGH to ensure smooth consistency.

4. Pass through a fine mesh chinois and transfer to a storage container.

5. Sore in an airtight container for up to 7 days in refrigeration, or for several months if frozen

Chef's Notes

1. The sugars in this recipe make it ideal for roasted or grilled foods exposed to dry air. When searing in a pan or on a stovetop, the sauce may burn or stick if it touches a hot surface. Instead, apply it generously at the end of searing and, if possible, finish cooking in a hot, dry convection oven to reduce and set the caramel onto the food's surface.

2. The smoked soy and black garlic are optional but add significant depth to the sauce. For simple variations, swap soy sauce or aminos with tamari or white soy. Confit garlic cloves can replace the black garlic, or you can use extra caramelised onions.

3. Add salt and vinegar to fully season the caramel. As it stands, it's versatile, adding a layer of sweetness and flavor that won't overpower existing seasonings. To use it as a standalone seasoning, you'll need to boost its intensity significantly.

AGED KIMCHI BALSAMIC

A sweet and acidic hot-sauce-like product made from the juice of prepared kimchi. Fresh kimchi juice becomes even more intense when reduced.

This recipe capitalizes on its potency, then uses agave, vinegar, and wood chips to mimic the effects of time.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups (500g) spicy cabbage kimchi, fresh
- 3 tablespoons agave or honey
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- ¼ cup wood chips, soaked in vinegar

DIRECTIONS

1. Juice the fresh kimchi, pressing or squeezing the pulp to extract as much liquid as possible. You should get about 50% juice from the original kimchi volume.

2. Set aside ¼ cup of the kimchi juice. Combine the remaining ¾ cup with the other ingredients, including the wood chips, in a small saucepan.

3. Quickly bring the ingredients to a simmer over HIGH heat, then adjust to LOW and cook until reduced by half. Once reduced, let the mixture cool, then stir in the reserved ¼ cup of kimchi juice.

4. The sauce is ready to use as is but will develop deeper wood flavor if refrigerated with the wood chips.

5. Refrigerate for up to 14 days or freeze for longer storage.

Chef's Notes

1. The wood chips in the recipe are soaked in vinegar, not the traditional water typically used in preparation for smoking. This maintains the sauce's acidity which in turn extends the shelf life and resiliency of the final product.

2. To deepen the sauce's flavor, try using aged ingredients like barrel-aged vinegars or sweeteners. If you're making a large enough batch, consider barrel ageing the entire mixture.

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MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA'S (MLA) purpose is to deliver world leading outcomes that fuel global competitiveness, sustainability and producer profitability to ensure prosperity for the Australian red meat and livestock industry. MLA collaborates with stakeholders to invest in research, development and marketing initiatives that contribute to producer profitability, sustainability and global competitiveness.

MLA is primarily funded by transaction levies paid on livestock sales by producers that are used to support marketing, research and development activities. MLA also receives matching funding from the Australian Government, unmatched grants and co-investment from other industry stakeholders.

Australia exports red meat and livestock to more than 100 countries, representing over 60% of the industry's production – however the Australian domestic market is the largest market for Australian beef and sheepmeat, and building and sustaining domestic demand is a core focus for MLA.

www.mla.com.au

RARE MEDIUM is MLA's foodservice program and the domestic foodservice industry's trusted go-to source of information about Australian red meat. In consultation with experts across the foodservice sector, Rare Medium provides education and inspiration to chefs from paddock to plate.

www.raremedium.com.au
Instagram @_raremedium
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