

Fresher way to bulk up

Buying meat direct from the grower is back in vogue, writes **Dianne Mattsson**

MEAT farmgates are on the rise, with evidence that flavour and budget-conscious families are buying in bulk, direct from the grower.

Our mothers might have trekked to the country to buy sides to take home, bag and label to share with friends and neighbours, but new-age farmers are taking orders online and delivering the meat to our doorsteps.

Leanne Srpek, owner/manager of Paris Creek Beef, says she is filling a growing list of share orders.

Her business, which deals only in bulk orders for 100 per cent grass-fed yearling beef, acts as a conduit to customers from her own 40ha property (plus agisted stock), as well as other purely Adelaide Hills farms. The meat can be purchased cut, packaged, labelled and ready, "but a lot of people like to pack and label it themselves to suit the way they split their order".

"Many of our customers are into healthy living and reducing costs. They are seeing the value and we are really keen to help educate them on shopping and reducing expenses," she says.

One of her customers, busy mother of three girls, Kristen

Woodley, shared a side of Paris Creek beef with her mother-in-law in January. Kristen has been experimenting with different cuts ever since. She says she is nearly ready to order again, this time with friends and neighbours keen to join the purchase.

"Buying meat this way, we know how the cows have been treated," Kristen says. "It tastes so much better than anything from the supermarket." The Fairview Park mum says her children now only want meat from "our cow".

Kangaroo Island farmer Andy Gilfilla has also seen a rise in bulk buys for lamb. He delivers South Rock Lamb in bulk to many families who order several boxes to share.

He says vacuum sealing gives those who might be lean on freezer space the option to store the meat in the fridge for three to four weeks.

"We've seen a big return to demand for secondary cuts after years of customers looking for racks," Andy says. "There are only two racks on a lamb that yields about 20kg of edible meat. It's great to see growing awareness of all the other great meat."

He says buying a couple of boxes to share also means you can split the cooking challenges.



OUT OF THE COLD: Kristen Woodley, right, and Melissa Pepper buy and share Paris Creek meat in bulk.

Leanne agrees, and gives her customers cooking suggestions for secondary cuts, and steers them to Google and internet cooking sites.

Here, she shares a Paris Creek farm favourite.

NANNA'S SLOW COOKED SAUSAGE CASSEROLE
1 tbsp olive oil
8-10 sausages
1 red onion, thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
400g can crushed tomatoes
2 tbsp tomato paste
1 tsp sugar

1 cup beef stock
2 tbsp port or Worcestershire sauce

Zucchini, mushrooms and/or carrots, chopped into large pieces (optional)

2 tbsp thyme leaves
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil in a large frypan on high heat and brown the sausages, then transfer to a slow cooker. Cover with onions, garlic, tomatoes, tomato paste, sugar, beef stock, port/Worcestershire sauce, vegetables and thyme.

Cook on low for 5-7 hours. If the mixture has a lot of liquid near the end of cooking, turn the slow cooker to high and set the lid a little to the side so that the excess water evaporates. Season to taste and serve over mashed potato, hot polenta or cooked pasta.

■ "Also, in winter I love cooking Vietnamese Pho bo Soup (beef and noodle soup) which has a delicious fresh flavour," says Leanne. "I use a recipe on taste.com.au (taste.com.au/recipes/19014/-beef+and+noodle+soup+pho+bo)."