

Meat with convenience

Anna Arndt, a director of Aria Farms, says beef and lamb can suit today's lifestyles

ANNA ARNDT

I was interested to read Fred Hellaby's comments in his article last month on tenderness of New Zealand Beef and Lamb and how important it is to customers, and the improvements in this over the last 10 years. This ties in with the market research we have completed at Aria Farm, which shows people want not only a tender product, but one that is quick to cook, delicious and healthy with a reasonable fat content.

CONSISTENT QUALITY

Another interesting statistic is telephone research has found 50% of mobile phone calls made between 4pm to 6pm are about what to have

for dinner. Therefore the planning is not usually done the night before as it may have been 10 to 20 years ago. The meat portion of the meal has to be chilled in the fridge or be able to be cooked from frozen.

We all know as a rule if you cook lamb or beef from frozen it is not too good, and, except for the top quality meats, you can not cook meat too quickly as it becomes less tender. Aria Farm has overcome this problem by making products that can be cooked straight from frozen and are still tender, using mainly forequarter meat, which gives just as high protein as any of the other pieces of meat. The process also adds carefully measured amounts of seaweed extract, vitamin C and calcium giving nutritious products where "you know what you are getting every time."

BENEFITS FOR ALL

Beef and lamb have health benefits for all, but especially for young children (to help develop babies' brains) and women, (who need plenty of 'ZIP' - zinc, iron and protein, to maintain healthy blood levels). For the younger children, the tenderness of meat is very important, as they cannot chew large, tough bits of meat and quite often refuse to eat it.

Aria Farm has completed research over the years into what consumers like about meat products. One of the most usual comments has been that children have loved the meat chips. In recent months we have relaunched the 'Chips' range as 'Strips.' We have taken what customers have said about some of our products and added a very small amount of salt to the 'Strips,' adjusting our recipe books accordingly.

New Zealand households are continuing to get busier and busier and people want meals that they can cook quickly, but they must still be good quality and taste good.

COOKING SATISFACTION

Twenty minutes is the time the busy cook expects to spend getting the evening meal on the table. New Zealanders also require a variety of meals: stir-fry one night, tacos the next, followed by a curry, then a burger, then a pasta dish. Meat and three veges is no longer acceptable fare for seven nights a week. The growth in the prepared sauce market with everything from

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a curry, a stir-fry, to a just-add-mince sauce, makes quick cooking of a tasty meal realistic.

Although everything is made easier and easier with things such as frozen stir-fry veges and sauces in a packet, the household cook still enjoys the satisfaction of putting the meal together, even if it is opening a packet of Aria Farm Lamb or Beef strips, a packet of stir-fry veges and a packet of stir fry sauce and quickly cooking them and serving on a bed of rice. The cook can say, "I've cooked this meal" and feel a sense of achievement. They are serving their families good, healthy meals.

Aria Farm lamb medallions, newly on the market, are designed to assist households fulfilling all of the above needs.

For New Zealand companies, it is a challenge to produce a healthy product and market it economically. To have the New Zealand Beef and Lamb Marketing Bureau charged with promoting beef and lamb as part of a nutritious, balanced diet is an asset to the people of New Zealand.

