

Green image drives

By Caroline James

A Tasmanian-based business has succeeded in building its brand in restaurants across Australia and is taking on export markets such as Japan, the United States, Korea and Russia with its grassfed beef – the Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef.

What sets this new brand apart for consumers is the perception of the natural high quality of Tasmanian fresh food. An increasing number are prepared to pay a premium for this characteristic.

HW Greenham and Sons, a family-run business across six generations, owns and operates two export beef facilities, one in Tasmania and the other in Victoria.

From a sole trader family business in the mid-1860s, HW Greenham and Sons Pty Ltd has grown into a multi-million-dollar meat export business with buying and export centres in Tongala (north-eastern Victoria) and Greenham Tasmania Pty Ltd at Smithton in Tasmania's pristine north-west.

The Tongala plant processes mainly cast-for-age dairy cows for export to the United States for the Burger King organisation.

Peter Greenham, of HW Greenham and Sons, says the Smithton plant processes 1500 cattle per week in Tasmania. Of this, 70% are exported and the remainder stays on the domestic market.

"Greenham Tasmania Pty Ltd processes young, high-quality stock for the high-end domestic market and also exports premium beef to Japan, Korea and Russia," Greenham says.

"There are distributors in each state selling to butchers and restaurants with two main domestic brands: Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef and Greenham Tasmania Natural Beef."

Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef is targeted at the high-end restaurant market.

"The cattle are 18-36 months of age," Greenham says. "They are a higher-carcase-weight product and a higher-marbled product. The cattle are grass-finished."

"The size of the primal does not suit the butcher shop trade but it is good for restaurants that are after a flavoursome, tender product with larger portion sizes," Greenham says.

The Greenham Tasmania Natural Beef is YG (yearling) product only with carcase weights from 180 to 280 kilograms, averaging 240. It is quite light in colour and tender. The primal size suits the butcher shop trade as portions can be cut thick without each piece weighing too much.

Greenham says both brands are hormone-free; antibiotic-free; free of genetically modified organisms (GMO); British breeds only (70%-80% Angus); Meat Standards Australia (MSA) graded; MSA Boning group 1-6 (GT natural beef); and MSA Boning group 1-4 (CG Natural Beef) — which is one of the highest grades of MSA being sold in Australia.

"Tasmania has banned all use of GM plants and any hormone growth promotants (HGP) in cattle," Greenham says.

Cape Grim on the north-west corner of the island, hosts a monitoring station that captures the world's most pure air.

"Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef is exceptional-quality beef



grown in a natural, pristine environment," Greenham says. "Only the best cattle are selected. They are graded according to Meat Standards Australia guidelines and this system guarantees tenderness and eating quality."

Greenham Tasmania Pty Ltd started grading MSA product midway through 2007 to help identify higher-quality carcasses and market them.

"I have seen other brands do this and it causes problems if you have product under the one brand in supermarkets and butcher shops and then in high-end restaurants where they can be charging a lot more for the experience," Greenham says.

"The restaurants that choose Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef want a 'wow factor' piece of steak to complement their menu. They are restaurants that can appreciate grassfed beef which has a distinct, different flavour and texture to grainfed beef."

new beef brand



Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef caters for consumers looking for the highest quality grass finished product plus all the attributes associated with healthy food and animal welfare.

Greenham says the company has meat distributors that look after the supply and relationships with the butchers or restaurants.

"If we get approached directly we will contact the distributor in the area to handle the enquiry," he says. "Our distributors have exclusivity on the brand and we find they tend to push the product more this way due to having limited risk on others supplying at cheaper prices."

The Greenham Tasmania Natural beef is aimed at butcher shops and caters for middle to high income earners.

"Our customers are prepared to pay a little extra for a premium beef meal," Greenham says.

"We also aim at butchers who will promote the fact the product is natural and that it is free of hormones and other non-natural stimulants. This, over time, will create repeat business and increased sales for the butcher and our product."

Market research shows people are starting to look for alternatives in a beef meal.

Where classy means grassy

Restaurant Two is the result of a successful partnership between chefs David Pugh and Michael Conrad. Food and drink are serious business at TWO, where classical knowledge and techniques combined with a modern approach create the style of enhanced simplicity the restaurant is renowned for.

Pugh's continual search for the best available fresh produce provides his inspiration and is the basis of the menu at Restaurant Two. He is acclaimed for working rare and premium produce from carefully sourced suppliers.

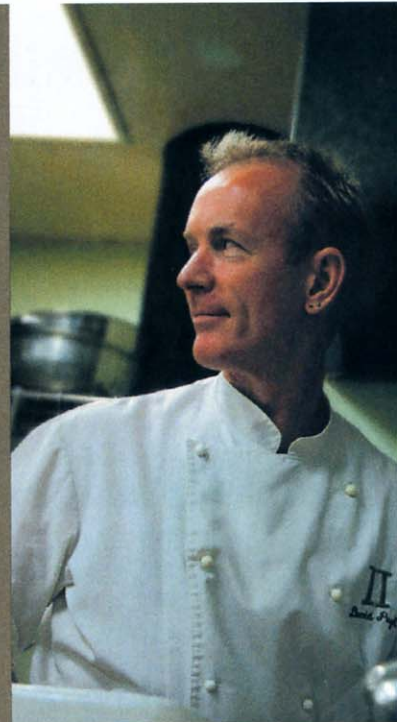
His use of classic technique combined with these fine ingredients and thoroughly modern flair are what place Restaurant Two at the forefront of contemporary Australian cuisine.

Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef's Grass Fed 'Black Angus' Sirloin and Eye Fillet are the only grassfed beef selections on the menu. Pugh says he came across Cape Grim when he was looking for a completely grassfed beef in September 2007.

"We were after a particular product and although it would have been ideal to have something Queensland in origin, there was drought around Australia and nothing was available," Pugh says.

"The Cape Grim is like the Aberdeen Angus in the UK. It's like revisiting an old friend. I was working in a hotel in Mayfair in London and we served the Aberdeen Angus.

"The Tasmanian climate is pretty similar to England. The Cape Grim has the weight, a good fat score, and has the grass flavour – really nice and grassy."



David Pugh says Cape Grim is the only grass finished beef he uses in the restaurant



Weight of Cape Grim brand cattle is heavier than is used in the domestic trade to ensure more flavour and marbling.

“Grainfed beef has always been said to be the most tender but some say it has no flavour. We try, by using MSA, to create a highly tender and flavoursome beef meal every time from grassfed beef.

“Consumers are also starting to be curious about where their produce comes from and by promoting it under the Tasmanian banner, this is reassuring that it is a good-quality product.”

Tasmania has a great reputation around Australia for excellent-quality produce ranging from seafood and vegetables to wines and cheese. The usually reliable rainfall and irrigation plus quality soil produce the best of the best in nearly every kind of food. Beef is yet another produce that Tasmania excels in producing.

Farmers involvement

The business buys cattle for its requirements on a weekly basis.

“Our prices and specifications are known by the farmers and they produce for our program,” Greenham says. “For our Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural brand, we have a group of 60-70 farmers who send us cattle regularly and they get paid a premium over market prices if our MSA specifications are achieved.

“The cattle that do not reach our MSA specifications are not discounted. We pay a premium for the good cattle and a standard price for the others.

“We do have supply problems during the winter time due to cattle performance and quality but our demand drops also in winter, so we can handle the decrease in throughput quite well.”

Carcases are graded according to boning groups, which equate to 5-star, 4-star and 3-star cuts. The 4- and 5-star cuts attain a premium but usually for only 4%-6% of the carcass.

The premium for grading MSA is very good as the better producers can achieve a 90%-100% compliance rate throughout most of the year. A 10% premium is given on top of an already good base price for the right article.

By achieving a high-quality MSA grade, the secondary primal can be used in substitution for the regular loin steaks. This in the end will increase the return for the carcass and payments to farmers.

Throughout winter the incidence of dark cutting increases, which reduces the availability of MSA beef. This problem has been alleviated a little by the use of electrical stimulation in plant and extra care in the yards to assure the cattle are handled properly before slaughter.

The farmers sourced to produce for the program are in the Circular Head area, in the north-west corner of Tasmania.

“We have been dealing with the farmers for years and are now asking them to be a part of the program.”

Future plans

Greenham’s future plans are to have 20-30 butcher shops and restaurants in each state that promote the brand to the consumer.

Greenham Tasmania Pty Ltd is talking with the Tasmanian Government about export markets — mainly Korea. For domestic, the business is doing its own thing with help from MSA marketing.

“MSA marketing helps in having trade days and producer nights to promote our brand and production system,” Greenham says.

Cape Grim Tasmanian Natural Beef has well-known chefs and restaurateurs involved, such as David Pugh, of Restaurant Two in Queensland, and Neil Perry, of Rockpool, who approached Cape Grim through an industry source.

It is also served at Cha Cha Chas in Brisbane, and Tetsuya’s uses the eye fillet through the Cape Grim distributor in Sydney.

“Tetsuya is a good supporter of Tasmanian produce,” Greenham says. “He recognises the great quality out of the region.

“We launched our Cape Grim beef through Bidvest in Queensland in August. Bidvest distributes in Queensland — that covers the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Brisbane. After the launch we had an influx of orders. Steakhouses and little bistros wanted a natural steak item. Neil Perry came along. He is a big supporter of ours and uses our beef at his Rockpool restaurant in Melbourne.”

Find out more:

Peter Greenham, www.greenhamnaturalbeef.com.au