

Dining

Someone's telling porkies

Amanda Davey

WHILE the free range concept has been enthusiastically embraced in this country when it comes to poultry products – with consumers reaping the benefits of real flavour over the battery produced equivalents – as a nation we have been significantly slower to acknowledge the humble pig's lot in life.

The agenda of animal rights activists aside, if you care about what you put in your mouth, choosing free range pork over the factory farmed variety should, at the very least, make your taste buds jump for joy.

However, it may come as a surprise to know there are only a handful of truly certified free range pork farmers operating in the country, so the majority of us have probably never known the joys of eating the real thing.

And that's a shame because if you are over the age of 40 you may remember when this popular white meat was bursting with genuine flavour and appeal.

That was before the days of sow stall intensive farming and the popular "lean" branding campaigns developed by industry body, Australian Pork Limited, which achieved the Heart Foundation's ubiquitous tick of approval for its efforts, but a large cross from some foodies when it comes to flavour.

While the elusive truly free range product may be hard to come by, northern beaches residents are now in the enviable position of becoming beneficiaries of the real McCoy, thanks to a relatively new Mudgee concern selling its quality pork produce at the Organic Food and Farmers Markets at Frenchs Forest.

Pork producer, Georgie Caspar along with her veterinary surgeon husband James, have been delighted with the uptake from locals of their free range pork, which arrives direct from their Mudgee property, Ormiston Free Range, on the fourth Sunday of the month.

"We produce two breeds including my favourite, the Berkshire which actually has marbling through it, unusual for pork," she said. "We also farm white cross pigs – a marriage of the large white Landrace and Duroc breeds.

"All free range pork has great flavour because the pigs are grown at a slower pace, allowed to run about and develop their muscles, ensured a stress-free existence and



Felix Caspar (above) on the farm with free range piglets and (below) Ormiston Free Range's James Caspar.

fed a seasonal diet, including whey from the local cheese factory."

However, Ms Caspar warned consumers not to be fooled by the common but misleading label *Bred Free Range* which often appears on ham, bacon and pork products, because she says these are not in fact, free range but simply meat from the offspring of sows that have merely conceived outside while their piglets are raised in pens.

"A lot of butchers sell *Bred Free Range* but consumers aren't getting true free roaming, pasture raised meat.

"We can't compete with the big pork producers on price and will never be able to.

"Demand for free range has to be driven by the consumer and I would encourage people to taste the difference.

"Our pigs live outside their whole lives, they are not tail docked, teeth clipped or castrated. Giving them a stress-free life away from growth promotants and antibiotics is our priority."

Frenchs Forest organic markets sells Ormiston's hand-made pork, porchini and herb sausages at \$17 per kilo, and a variety of cuts including loin and shoulder roasts, pork belly, chops, tenderloin fillets and US-style ribs at surprisingly reasonable prices.

The Caspars guarantee that even the crackling is significantly more flavoursome than factory-farmed pork.

For more on Australian free range pork go to www.freerangeporkfarmers.com.au or www.ormistonfreerange.com.au. Ormiston will be at Frenchs Forest Organic Food and Farmers Markets on August 23.



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