



*Have you ever heard of this county of ours called 'Porkshire'? Well, its actually quite apt, since almost a quarter of English pork is produced here, and you don't have to travel far to see pigs pottering around in fields, living the good life with lots of space, well made arks and showing a general air of contentment.*

## Yorkshire Pork

*Buying locally produced pork and bacon is not always easy*

> Contentment is not the sentiment felt though by many of the regions pig farmers. With a reduction by nearly half of the pig stock in Britain over the past three years, British pig farmers are having a hard time. The problems seem to be twofold. First there is the strong pound which cuts the cost of imports and encourages retailers to buy foreign, and then there is the sticky issue of welfare standards. In Britain these have been raised recently banning the use of sow stalls amongst other things and incurring extra costs to our farmers. The European Parliament aims to have similar standards for welfare by 2006, but until then the cost of production will inevitably be uneven - with corners like Britain being the losers.

**Deceptive labels**  
Buying locally produced pork and bacon is not always easy. Naturally we all prefer to buy Yorkshire produce if we can, but labels can be deceptive. You would think that a pack of bacon showing a distinct red, white and blue flag was British, wouldn't you? But in actual fact it could have come from a pig reared abroad and brought to Britain to be slaughtered and then cured as bacon here. Look out for the weasel words 'processed in Britain' and beware.

No wonder Colin and Jill Piercy find this issue difficult. Colin has been farming pork in Stillington for thirty-five years and with his 350-breeding sows, is acutely aware of the challenge set by imported meat. 'People do buy on price, but if they think its local then they don't mind a little extra' says Colin. Jill often does promotions for the Yorkshire branch of 'Ladies in Pigs' and as she cooks up delicious dishes in supermar-



kets is dismayed at the marketing strategy of 'buy one and get one free' offered by Danish bacon. "Just check that the pork you are buying has been 'hatched, matched and dispatched' here in Britain" she says.

### High standards

Colin is a survivor though. He has set himself high standards and now gets a premium price on his excellent pork, which he sells as fresh cuts into the retail trade.

This is the answer then to survival at this difficult time in the pig industry, and there are clever pork producers all over Yorkshire who are doing something slightly different from the norm, just to stay in the race.

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cures bacon and hams with a special mixture of salts and sells fresh cuts of pork to order. There isn't a farm shop, but you can phone or call and pick up, have a delivery or receive your pork or bacon by mail order. Helen takes her pork, bacon and sausages to the local Farmers Markets, so you could visit her

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Helen and Anthony Milner have been farming for over twenty years at Dotterel Farm at Weavertherpe near Malton, with pigs as their main interest. This current crisis though, has driven them to develop a new business to run alongside the traditional pork production. Reared in an intensive unit, the Milners' pigs are farmed according to standards set by Assured British Pigs, which means that they are given no antibiotics or growth promoters routinely in their feed. And as an extra bonus, their feed is produced from grain grown and milled on the farm and mixed with their own water supply. A high proportion of the pork produced by the Milners goes to the Malton Bacon factory, but some is slaughtered locally, just six miles away, and returned to the farm. Here it is butchered and Helen makes up to one and a half thousand sausages each week. She also dry

there, or pay a visit to Tuddle Lane Restaurant at Malton where they are proud to use Dotterel Farm Prime Yorkshire Sausages and Bacon on their menu.

### Hard life

Happy Piggy Pork is the idea of another clever pork farmer in Yorkshire. David Kiely used to be a bank manager but gave it all up to join his wife Anne in her passion for rearing pigs. Not just any pigs though, but rare breeds such as Gloucester Old Spot, Tamworth, Berkshire, Landrace and Large White. Today the Kiely's have 300 pigs, all living outside and free range. "Only when they are expecting piglets do I take them inside, because they need to be near me and I can make sure that the piglets have the best possible welfare". The Kiely's have 100 acres and often the pigs are spread over quite a distance.

## Recipe

### PORK MINCE with Ham, Leek and Cheese

*Serves: 3-4*

*Cooking Time: about 6-10 minutes*

*450g (1lb) lean pork mince*

*4 tablespoons low-fat mayonnaise*

*4 tablespoons low-fat fromage frais*

*Salt and black pepper*

*1 leek, washed and chopped*

*50g (2oz) ham, chopped*

*50g (2oz) low-fat cheese, grated*

*Salt and black pepper*

*In a large non-stick saucepan, dry fries the mince until it changes colour, about 5 minutes. Stir in the rest of the ingredients and simmer for 2-3 minutes.*

*Serve with new potatoes, rice or pasta and some vegetables such as carrot strips and broccoli florets.*

Life can be hard for Anne and David who spend long days tending their livestock. Fed on a diet of fruit, vegetables and bread, with no concentrates, the early morning will often find Anne off to the wholesale fruit and vegetable market to buy up breakfast for her thriving pig population. It is this combination of breed and feed that makes the pigs happy and that in turn gives them the most wonderful flavour. "The pigs take a lot longer to finish because we feed them no concentrates and their meat has a distinct taste and is darker in



> colour. Its more like the old fashioned traditional pork," says Anne. Fat pigs are a thing of the past too, even for these traditional breeds because Anne cross breeds her stock to keep them slim. Slaughtered by Horners's at Thirsk, the meat is either sold directly on to satisfy orders or returned to the farm where it is deep frozen. Superb sausages are made to order by master butcher David Thompson at Bedale, and a lot of the meat is sold in joints. Once tasted most customers come back for more, and the Kielys' are not short of customers.



*It improves the flavour when the piglets stayed a greater length of time with mum before weaning.*

### Breed, feed and passion

Andrew Warriner knows why his pork tastes better than the rest too. Born and brought up at Mosswood Farm in Crayke, near Easingwold, pigs have always been his passion. Although he thinks that breed and feed are important, for Andy it is the longer life that his pigs enjoy, with more time to mature and a greater length of time for the piglets to stay with mum before weaning that improves the flavour. Andy has over one hundred and twenty pigs, mainly British Hampshires. He

~ "I could see that people wanted to buy proper dry cured bacon, not wet stuff that has been soaked in brine and doesn't cook properly" ~

sells a lot locally, as whole and half carcasses, which he has butchered by Hartleys at Tholthorpe. Hartleys make some of the best sausages around and one of their aficionados is Val Austin who has recently started a new business curing bacon and ham.

### Back to the roots

Oakleaf Bacon and Farm Shop is well on its way to success, even though it was only established a year ago. Val Austin always used to keep pigs, in fact her father used to cure pork in the traditional way, which is why Val wanted to go back to her roots. "I could see that people wanted to buy proper dry cured bacon, not wet stuff that has been soaked in brine and doesn't cook properly". Val buys the 'boned out middles' from Hartley's abattoir, and she then cures them with a special mixture of salts and a little sugar for a week in her cold larder. The bacon then needs another week to dry out before it is ready for slicing. Val also buys in boned out hams which take ten days to cure and about two weeks to dry before they are ready. It is easy to buy Val's bacon, just drop into her farm shop and you

can choose from a range of bacon, bacon bits, bacon joints, Val's continental ham (rather like Parma ham) and gammon rashers and joints. If you want your bacon cut thicker or thinner, then Val is happy to oblige. She slices every Thursday, so just let her know and it will be sliced and ready for you to collect. You can also buy farm butter, enormous free range eggs, pork tenderloin, spiced beef, home made burgers and of course, Hartley's sausages. Oh, and ice cream made from jersey cream and home made cakes and scones too. If Sutton on the Forest is out of your way, then Ann Smith stocks Val's bacon on her cheese stall at Easingwold market on Fridays.

### Something different

This is perhaps the success behind Yorkshire pork. Those pig farmers who have broken away from the usual mould, done something different and offered their customers that little bit extra are the survivors. And whether it is a higher quality of meat, rare breeds, special feeds or extra maturing time, what really matters to the customer, is the flavour on the plate.

## Addresses

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**Andrew Warriner**  
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**Val Austin, Oakleaf Bacon and Farm Shop**  
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