

Mr Txuleta's Txuleta

JANUARY 20, 2015 / LAP



Do not adjust your set, deep crimson txuletas. Galician left, Basque Cider House right

There are food moments I'll never forget. Eating at [Asador Etxebarri](#) in the rolling Basque hills between Bilbao and San Sebastian is one of them. [Victor Arguinoniz](#) is a grilling genius, the menu is a masterpiece. Every ingredient the best the region has to offer, cooked simply over fire using pioneering

instruments and techniques. The main part of the meal ended with a Galician beef chop, a txuleta (or chuleta in Spanish), perfectly charred on the outside and crimson rare inside.



Txuleta at Asador Extebarri

Basque gourmands, that's probably everyone in the region, have a different philosophy when eating beef steaks. In Basque cider houses and eating clubs they are chargrilling massive steaks taken from retired farm cattle up to 16 years old. Let's put this into perspective, in most other countries us included, we eat beef that is generally 2 years old. It's big enough at that age to get a good yield. So a retired dairy cow or farm ox would surely be

tough and inedible? Well this is not the case. These steaks are so tender and have an incomparably deep beefy flavour. You can see it's different from the look of it, the angry crimson colour of the meat shows that these animals have been working for a lot longer than a couple of years. The ageing allows more natural grass-fed marbling of the meat so that's it's comparable to the marbling of genetically optimised grain-fed US, Japanese and generic Wagyu beef. I do like this fatty grain-fed beef too, the taste is luscious and the texture is "melt-in-the-mouth" but I don't kid myself, it doesn't really taste of beef anymore. I prefer the taste of the traditional grass-fed breeds of cattle we have in Britain; Dexter, Whitepark and Belted Galloway are all fantastic.

When I heard a [Mr Txuleta on Twitter](#) talking about supplying the beef at red-hot restaurant [Kitty Fisher's](#) in Mayfair I was more than interested. Turns out Mr Txuleta is Nemanja Borjanovic who runs Basque restaurant [Donostia](#) near Marble Arch. Nemanja has a line in importing this beef into the country and if you ask him very nicely he can set some aside for you to pick up at his restaurant. Good bloke eh? But seriously he has a passion for this beef and it really shows when you talk to him. Read more about it on his website txuleta.co.uk. I was lucky enough to nab the last steaks from a batch that arrived at the start of the year. A boneless rib steak from a native Galician Blonde and a more generic Basque Cider House on the bone.

Meat procured I was eager to relive a part of that Etxebarri experience. To do justice to this noble beef I had cook it over wood embers. I seasoned a few oak logs by baking them in a low oven to fully dry them out. The logs then take only seconds to fully alight and won't spit. After ten minutes the logs have burnt down enough for the meat to go on with a generous sprinkle of coarse salt. A good amount of fat means plenty of flareups, so I kept flipping and resting in the safe zone of the grill (an area with no direct heat source underneath). It's a crime to cook these steaks past medium rare so I didn't! I pulled it off the grill and rested it well for five minutes. Sliced and served with romesco sauce and a sprinkling of salt.



Split hardwood logs



Build fire



Wait till logs are burned down



Season with salt just before



Keep flipping, watch out for flareups



Have a safe zone



At home with a Galician blond and salsa romesco

The eating qualities of this beef cannot be understated. It ticks all boxes in terms of flavour and texture. Then for me it also ticked boxes in the corners of my food memories. It took us right back to Etxebarri. If anything we enjoyed it more! At Etxebarri the txuleta comes at the end of a long and generous tasting menu. We could only manage a couple of slices each. At home we devoured the lot and savoured every last morsel. We were able to fill our bellies with this incredible beef.

If you like steak then it's a must, you need to try this style of beef and see what the fuss is all about. You can try it in Donostia, Kitty Fishers or [Barrafina](#) for a premium (£65/kg in Barrafina!). Or you can contact Mr Txuleta for a txuleta* to cook at home. I have him on speed dial now.

* I love saying the word "txuleta" at the moment