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# THE WILLIAMS GUIDE TO MEAT AGEING

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# WILLIAMS – A MEAT AGEING PEDIGREE

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Williams has market-leading expertise in meat ageing equipment. For over a decade the company has been working with butchers, Michelin star chefs and casual dining operators who specialise in offering their customers dry aged beef. Led by their requirements and ideas, backed by our own expertise, the Williams engineering team has developed a range of specialist equipment to store meat while it ages to get best yield, texture and flavour.

Now we can offer a choice of meat ageing products, from compact cabinets to large volume coldrooms, to suit the needs of any business, however big or small.

And the Williams name means you can rely on the equipment to deliver absolute temperature control and reliability.







## SOPHIE'S STEAKHOUSE

London's Sophie's Steakhouse group is passionate about steaks. The company realised that the ageing process could be part of the theatre of their restaurants. So they installed a Williams coldroom front of house, with a huge glass window displaying the hanging meat. To fit in with the restaurant's chic industrial décor the coldroom is clad in a 'rust' finish.

***"We want to shout about the quality of our meat and the fact that it's aged for 28 days," says co-owner Sophie Bathgate. "The coldroom certainly does that for us. It's out front, right by the kitchen, it looks great and we love it. It cements what we do."***



## ARTHUR HOWELL

The Howell family first opened a butcher's shop in Wells next-the-Sea, Norfolk in 1889. Not surprisingly, the family believes strongly in traditional methods, and has always been keen on meat ageing. So when Williams launched a meat ageing cabinet Arthur was eager to try it out. "Customers like things that stand out and are different, the Williams Meat Ageing cabinet certainly delivers," he says.

### ARTHUR'S TIPS

- 28 days is the minimum to make a real impact on taste and texture.
- Beef is the most popular meat to dry age, but lamb works well, too. I would only dry age lamb under 21 days.
- If the meat is on show make sure there's plenty of light in the cabinet.
- Keep meat on the bone during ageing.
- Avoid cuts like topside: you don't want too much lean meat on the outside edge.



*Dry ageing steak gives a fabulous end product – a steak that's tender, full of flavour and delivers a greatly enhanced dining experience*

## MEAT AGEING; WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Although dry ageing meat is a centuries-old practice, the fashion for dry aged beef has really picked up in the last few years. Why do it? Mainly because it gives a fabulous end product – a steak that's tender, full of flavour and delivers a greatly enhanced dining experience.

However, the end product is only part of the trend – these days many restaurants will display the meat, front of house, as a statement. There's a certain amount of theatre to it, of course, but also by showing the meat ageing the restaurant is underlining its credentials, by displaying the process and the quality of the meat. Plus, it's a real point of difference and a great customer draw.

In terms of what sort of meat can you dry age, the answer is mutable. Beef is by far the most popular and the key criteria is that meat should be well marbled, so grain- or corn-fed animals are best.

Longhorn, Angus and Hereford are amongst popular breeds for meat ageing. The joints should be on the bone and ideally have a covering of fat, so cuts like sirloin and rib are ideal. As for alternatives to beef, some push pork as a good meat ageing prospect, others lamb – even poultry has its advocates.



## THE SCIENCE OF MEAT AGEING

Before the science, a little history. Meat ageing has been around for centuries, ever since humans discovered meat tasted better and was more tender if it was left to hang for a while rather than being eaten fresh. Dry ageing the meat extends the ageing process – the downside being the time and expense involved.

Ageing means the enzymes in the beef break down its muscle tissue, making it more tender. Meanwhile the evaporation of moisture from the meat concentrates the beef flavour. Many argue the result is the best beef you'll ever taste.

It's essential that the meat is stored not only at the right temperature but also at the right relative humidity, typically 60-90%. Which is why a standard fridge or coldroom is not good for dry meat ageing – it will usually have a relative humidity of around 50%, which isn't enough.

Previously meat was aged in coldrooms without humidity control, with the result that mould would grow on it. The mould could be trimmed off, but obviously this impacted not only on the yield but also the look of the meat as it aged.

Fresh cut meat is bright red and marbled. As it ages it turns darker. After the animal has been slaughtered it may be hung for up to 10-12 days before the dry meat ageing process begins. So how long should beef be aged for? 28 days is standard, though some chefs and butchers age their meat for significantly longer, since it intensifies the flavour. In 2014 the Dallas Chop House in Texas served a steak that had been dry-aged for 459 days! The loss of moisture will reduce size and yield: the longer the ageing, the lower the yield. Sticking to good quality beef should maximise yield – without doubt, British is best.

*It's essential that the meat is stored not only at the right temperature but also at the right relative humidity*



## HIMALAYAN ROCK SALT

Williams supplies its dry meat ageing cabinets with Himalayan rock salt, because it assists the ageing process. The beautiful pink salt (the colour is the result of trace minerals such as calcium and potassium) comes from the Great Salt Range in the Himalayas.

The salt deposits were formed hundreds of millions of years ago and discovered, according to legend, by Alexander the Great. For centuries the salt has been promoted for its health benefits, being used in all sorts of ways, from spa caves to salt lamps. When it comes to meat ageing, some say its benefits include inhibiting bacteria growth, helping the enzymes break down the muscle tissues and enhancing the flavour.

*When it comes to meat ageing, some say Himalayan rock salt benefits include inhibiting bacteria growth*



## SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DRY AGE MEAT?

The three core elements are;

- Good beef
- A good butcher
- A good meat ageing cabinet or cold room that you can rely on to get on with the job.

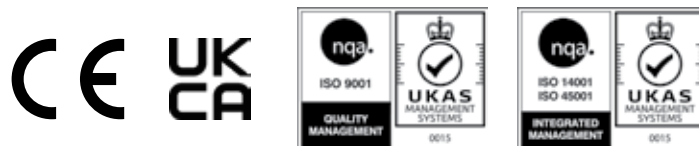
*Stock rotation is critical - so it's vital that meat is clearly labelled*

One critical aspect of dry ageing meat is stock rotation – so it's absolutely vital that meat is clearly labelled and dated.



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Installation of all Williams products requires adequate ventilation.  
 Williams reserves the right to modify the design, materials and finish in accordance with its progressive development policy.

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