

Farmers' Market OF THE MONTH



With Benjamin Dent, chairman Kent Farmers' Market Association

Capel-le-Ferne typifies how deeply rooted Farmers' Markets are in their communities, far beyond acting just as an alternative to supermarkets. The market was established to raise funds for the village hall and also acts as a social event – the local primary school sends children along each week to see the seasonal produce and talk to stallholders about its production.

The market's success was recognised by this magazine some years ago. "We were all thrilled when we won *Kent Life's* Best Farmers' Market in 2004," says Jenny Barraclough, one of the founding managers, who has often advised potential managers looking to setting up their own markets.

Graham and Miranda Palmer sell their meat here and at seven other Kent markets. Graham is a fourth-generation Weald farmer. They raise Aberdeen Angus beef for its marbled, succulent meat, which is matured for a minimum of three weeks, along with Romney lamb and Berkshire and Saddleback pork.

Miranda says that animal welfare is a priority, "We believe in happy, healthy animals that have the freedom to behave naturally. We use neither growth promoters nor in-feed antibiotics."

These breeds are also suited to their non-intensive farming. Much of their farm near Smarden is managed under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Together with renovating hedgerows



and clearing ponds, this precludes artificial fertilisers and sprays, benefiting natural wildlife and plants.

This year, they opened a cutting plant in order to retain control from farm-to-consumer, and to add more value in making sausages, bacon, and cooked hams. Other local farmers are also using the facilities. "Having a Master Butcher on site allows us to offer rare cuts of meat, as well as the traditional favourites, while preventing waste since we are using the whole animal," says Miranda.

Food File

Capel-le-Ferne Farmers' Market is held on Tuesdays from 10am to 12.30pm in the Village Hall, Lancaster Avenue.

Farmer Palmer's Quality Meats can also be found at Elham, Headcorn, Horsmonden, Hythe, Penshurst, Rolvenden and Egerton Farmers' Markets. Pre-order to secure your choice via their website: www.farmerpalmermeats.co.uk.



RECIPE

Baker shoulder of lamb
serves 6

- 1 boned shoulder of lamb, rolled and tied
- 1 onion, thinly sliced
- 1 tbs each of rosemary and thyme
- 3 tbsps redcurrant jelly
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tbsp French mustard
- 2-3 tbsps of breadcrumbs
- 200ml each of red wine and water
- Olive oil and butter
- 1kg waxy potatoes (pink fir-apple; Anya or other salad type variety), scrubbed

Preheat oven to 160C/325F/Gas mark 3.

Brown the lamb all over in a heavy bottomed casserole dish in some olive oil and butter. Add the onions and sauté gently for five minutes until soft and just turning light brown. Remove from heat.

Meanwhile, heat the wine and water until almost boiling, and pour around the lamb. Mix the herbs, redcurrant jelly, mustard, garlic and seasoning in a paste; then add the breadcrumbs. Press this along the top of the lamb.

Add the potatoes to the dish. Pop the lid on, and then cook for 1.5 hours. Remove from the oven, but allow to rest – with the lid still on – for 20 minutes. Remove the lamb to carve and put the potatoes back in the oven to keep warm. While carving, reduce the liquid if you prefer it thicker.

Serve with carrots or, after the first frosts, parsnips.