

Thursday, December 17, 2009

If you are not eating Hawk Hill lamb, you are just eating sheep.

We have had two meals based on our purebred Tunis lamb and personally we thought the meat was delectable. A delicate aroma and flavour with fine-grained tender meat. Exactly what we had been led to believe by Tunis boosters.

We decided to put the lamb to a taste test and compared four different breeds of sheep. We tested our pure Tunis, our cross-bred Tunis/Cheviot, another Ontario lamb of a different breed from an organic farm and commercially available lamb from New Zealand. All were loin chops and all were cooked the same with no flavour additions. The lambs originating from our farm were both raised under the same regime though the Tunis Cheviot cross was about one month younger than the pure Tunis. There were four of us testing flavour, texture, aroma and taste. While not a true blind taste test it was the best we could do in a social dinner setting.

Well there was a significant difference in all the lamb. The least difference was between the Tunis and the Tunis/Cheviot cross. All of us preferred the Tunis and or the Tunis Cheviot. The Ontario lamb from another farm was not liked by any of us and the New Zealand lamb was in between. The Tunis and the Tunis/Cheviot had a more pleasant aroma, texture and flavour. The meat was more tender and the flavour was rich without a "wooly" after taste.

At one point I was considering selling our Tunis ewes and just using the Tunis/Cheviot crossbreds. Welllll.... the taste test has made me reconsider and the Tunis ewes are going to remain as part of our lamb production flock.

We then had the balance of the New Zealand lamb for our meal the next night. I am totally spoiled. Tunis rocks.

We are trying to encourage a meat marketing agency here in Ontario to run a chef-judged taste challenge. Growth statistics, conformation, carcass structure etc are all important but in your breeding program you cannot forget the most important factor - taste.

Later
Laurie