

October 16, 2012

After a Ban, Wagyu From Japan Returns

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After an absence of nearly three years, wagyu is being allowed back into the United States from Japan. Imports of the beef had been discontinued because of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Japan, and so restaurants and shops sold beef from wagyu cattle raised in the United States, and many will continue to do so. But there is a big difference. The genuine Japanese version, bottom, is as costly for one steak as a cashmere sweater and is much more densely marbled with fat. Its muscle is paler in color than its American counterpart, top. There are grades of Japanese wagyu, the highest being 10 to 12. It has a more complex flavor, think “umami.” And when cooking it to medium, it’s essential to put a good bit of sear on the buttery fat.

American wagyu, which is typically crossbred with Angus and finished with corn, not barley, is less tightly traced with fat and is redder. It is beefier-tasting, more like a super tender, classic American steak. There is also Australian wagyu, which is closer in flavor and texture to the Japanese, but shy of the ultimate wagyu experience.

Wagyu from Japan is available from DeBragga in Jersey City, debragga.com, (646) 873-6555. A 12-ounce boneless Japanese rib-eye is \$95, strip loin is \$110. American wagyu strip loins are \$75 for two 12-ounce steaks for regular grade, \$95 for more marbling. Australian wagyu strip loins are \$99 for two 12-ounce steaks.