



Beyond burgers: why chefs and retailers should rethink BBQ menus this summer

MEDIA ALERT | 16 March 2026

As BBQ season approaches, retailers and hospitality operators are being encouraged to look beyond traditional burgers and steaks and explore a wider range of cuts and flavours for the grill.

According to Gaynor Stokes, meat adviser to the European Union's 'More Than Only Food & Drink' campaign, changing consumer expectations are creating opportunities to rethink how meat is presented and enjoyed during the summer months.

"BBQ season is a moment when people are more open to trying something new," says Stokes. "It's a great opportunity for chefs and retailers to introduce different cuts, flavours and traditions that bring variety and excitement to the table."

Consumer attitudes towards food are also evolving. With increased scrutiny of ultra-processed foods, shoppers are paying closer attention to labels, and are placing greater emphasis on provenance, safety and sustainability when choosing meat.

"Good-quality meat is natural, nutrient-dense and rich in protein. When it comes to summer BBQs, some underrated and less familiar cuts can provide exciting options that deliver both flavour and versatility," Stokes adds.

For chefs, BBQs offer an excellent opportunity to elevate cuts such as chicken thighs and pork steaks. Diners continue to be inspired by international cuisines, and flavour-packed rubs and marinades can transform these cuts into standout dishes.

"Spices from the European Union - such as **Paprika Žitava PDO** from Slovakia and **Piment d'Espelette PDO** from France, work particularly well in marinades for chicken and pork. Once marinated, the

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meats can be chopped and skewered to create dishes inspired by Greek souvlaki and other Mediterranean favourites.”

Alfresco cooking also lends itself to larger cuts such as beef brisket, lamb shank, pork belly and shoulder. These cuts can be marinated with herbs and spices and cooked slowly in charcoal smokers or ovens before being finished over the BBQ when guests arrive.

“The beauty of these flavour-packed cuts is that they pair brilliantly with simple accompaniments such as flatbreads, salads and condiments,” says Stokes.

To help consumers feel confident cooking these cuts at home, she suggests retailers provide guidance through shelf-talkers, recipe cards and online content offering cooking instructions, marinade ideas and serving suggestions.

“There is also an opportunity to introduce distinctive European products that work particularly well on the BBQ, including **Chorizo Riojano PGI** from Spain, **Nürnberger Bratwürste PGI** from Germany and **Kiełbasa lisiecka PGI** from Poland. These traditional meats have stood the test of time in their regions and can bring new flavours and inspiration to summer BBQ menus”, she adds.

Consumers are increasingly interested in the provenance and production standards behind the meat they buy. Across the European Union, farms must be registered to enable full tracking and tracing, while strict controls monitor hormones, chemical residues and microbial contamination. Regulations also govern hygiene, labelling, refrigeration, animal and plant health, and animal welfare.¹

The diverse landscapes, breeds and culinary traditions across the EU offers chefs and retailers a rich story of origin and authenticity.

Galician beef from northern Spain is one example gaining attention in hospitality. Raised on the region’s lush pastures and fed a natural diet, the cattle produce tender, well-marbled meat with a notable depth of flavour.

“BBQs are all about flavour, sharing and discovery,” concludes Stokes. “By introducing new cuts, traditions and ingredients, retailers and chefs can offer something that feels both exciting and authentic for the season ahead.”

This year, those who approach their BBQ menus with imagination and innovation will be best placed to offer something different while still meeting the high expectations of today’s consumers.

¹ Traceability https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-10/gfl_req_factsheet_traceability_2007_en.pdf



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Notes to editors:

In 2024, the European Union launched the 'More Than Only Food and Drink' campaign to promote the EU's incredible range of food & beverages across the UK market.

The campaign aims to promote European food & beverage products to food and drink professionals in the UK, highlighting the key characteristics of the products (safety, quality, authenticity, and sustainability), with a focus on EU quality schemes - Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) - as well as the EU organic label.

For more information please [visit our website](#) or contact: morethanfood_UK@agripromotion.eu

