

A tale of two chops

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Sticker shock happens frequently to shoppers unused to buying sustainable foods, be it cage-free eggs, organic milk or fair-trade whatever. With veal, which is pricey anyhow, it's a double whammy.

Whether the price difference is justified for humanely raised, free-range veal is a judgment left to the consumer. But the practices for raising the calves, which can include keeping them crated, have long been controversial.

Our interest was piqued when Allen Brothers, the Chicago-based mail-order meat company, introduced Strauss Meadow Reserve veal, a line of humanely raised, antibiotic- and hormone-free veal. We decided to taste it alongside the veal chops at Whole Foods Market, which has similar guidelines for the veal that it sells.

We grilled veal chops on a stove-top grill, adding just enough oil, and seasoning each with salt and pepper.

The good news, provided you can handle the price tag (hey, it's the holidays) is that both earned high marks from the Good Eating staff, giving short-shrift to the argument that a calf has to be prevented from moving to produce good-flavored meat.

Results

Allen Brothers Strauss Meadow Reserve (4 10-ounce chops, \$145; \$36.25 per chop, allenbrothers.com): "Very rich, tender, lovely." "More flavor than the other."

Whole Foods Market (1 1.12-pound chop, \$28): "Great texture, great looking." "Milder, more tender, fattier flavor -- good!"

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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