

There's finally time to take it slow in the kitchen, and the best meat cuts are the cheaper ones needing more TLC

Cheaper meat cuts are most often from the hindquarter of the animal, on the bone and contain more fat. They tend to be tougher but with the know-how, you can unlock the rich umami flavours. Liezl Vermeulen shares her secrets

Slow and steady

Low and slow cooking is generally the way to go. Cuts like beef chuck, shin, lamb knuckles or oxtail need to be cooked to the point where the meat falls from the bone or can be shredded easily using two forks.

Although cooking meat in a pressure cooker would cut the cooking time considerably, the same result can be achieved in an oven set to a low temperature, anything from 160°C or less, for longer periods of time – about 2-3 hours, depending on the size of the cut.

Tenderise meat

There are a few ways to do this. Marinating in an acid-based marinade (using lemon or vinegar) or a coarse salt-spice rub can be used – rub over meat and set aside for at least an hour. Pounding raw meat with a meat mallet could work but does not apply to on-the-bone or thicker cuts.

What to do once the meat is cooked and remains tough? Thinly slicing cooked meat against the grain makes it less tough.

Add some sauce

Cooking meat in a flavoursome liquid helps to break down the meat fibres and prevents it from drying out. Using ingredients like stock, canned tomatoes (whole, chopped or puréed), curry pastes or cook-in-sauces are great ways to provide a flavourful base for the meat to cook in.