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WAGYU SKIRT

THE WAGYU STEER WAS DEVELOPED in the late 19th century in Japan by crossbreeding a variety of imported European cattle with one from Korea. Wagyu became popularly known in the United States as Kobe, the Japanese city that developed animals with the highest marbling.

That marbling, which contributes to the meat's legendary tenderness and flavor, is so pervasive that it is hard to know where the meat stops and the fat begins. In the Japanese beef-grading system, USDA Prime meat would grade somewhere between four and six points, about half the score of top Wagyu beef.

Because the cost of full-blooded Wagyu meat would be prohibitive for many consumers, most Wagyu meat sold in the United States—including at Del Frisco's—actually comes from crossbreeding Wagyu with another breed, usually Angus.

We chose a skirt steak because this coarsely textured cut offers a taste experience different from that of the more common steaks. The skirt, which achieved enormous popularity with the Mexican dish fajitas, looks like a long, wide belt (*fajita* is the diminutive of *faja*, Spanish for girdle). Because the meat is so thin, using high heat is important to get the outside seared and caramelized before the meat is fully cooked, especially when seeking medium-rare.

At the restaurant, the meat was cooked on a flat-top grill because the broiler would be too

intense for such a thin piece. At home, you can simulate this with a cast-iron skillet over medium- to medium-high heat. Figure two to three minutes on each side.

The Wagyu skirt at Del Frisco's was sweet and fatty, with a pleasant chewiness that is more a factor of the cut than of the breed of cattle.

O'Day's pick for this steak was Mollydooker's Shiraz McLaren Vale Carnival of

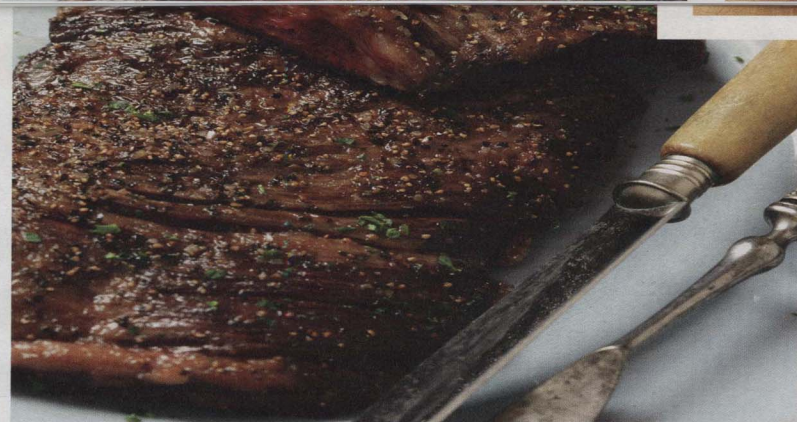
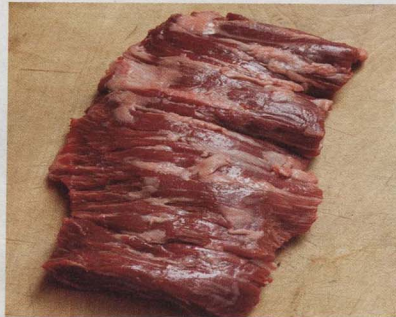
Love 2007 (95, \$90). "The Shiraz has a good balance of

tannin and acid," he says. "You could also go with a California Cab."

The earthiness of the Malbec, its rich fruitiness and thick texture combined to create a positive experience with the steak. The leathery, meaty notes in the Shiraz took it up a notch or two from the Malbec, making the Aussie red the best match. The nutty, earthy qualities of the super Tuscan held it in good stead with the Wagyu. While not a bad choice, the California Meritage didn't hang in there long enough on the finish to balance out the chewy texture of the meat.

Our tasting gives you but a peek at the many steak possibilities for restaurant and home dining, as well as at the numerous wine choices to go with them. Give yourself a bonus, and enjoy.

Contributing editor Sam Gugino has been writing for Wine Spectator since 1994.



HOW TO
GET IT

- * **ALLEN BROTHERS**, Chicago, (800) 957-0111, www.allenbrothers.com (Prime, Wagyu)
- * **D'ARTAGNAN**, Newark, N.J., (800) 327-8246, www.dartagnan.com (Australian grass-fed and Wagyu)
- * **DEBRAGGA AND SPITLER**, New York, (212) 924-1311, www.debragga.com (Prime, Wagyu, grass-fed)
- * **HARDWICK BEEF**, Hardwick, Mass., (413) 477-6500, www.hardwickbeef.com (American grass-fed)
- * **LOBEL'S PRIME MEATS**, New York, (877) 783-4512, www.lobels.com (Prime, Wagyu)
- * **NIMAN RANCH**, Oakland, Calif., (866) 808-0340, www.nimanranch.com (Pasture-raised)
- * **STOCK YARDS**, Chicago, (877) 785-9273, www.stockyards.com (Prime, Wagyu)