

FOCUS

William and Emily Beetham's Silver Fern farmers' family. From left: William, 40, Alfie, 5, Emily, 31 stand in front of the ancestral homestead, the Beetham family home.



A Homestead with a History

A family sheep and beef farming legacy spanning 158 years, where sixth generation Silver Fern Farmers William and Emily Beetham are very much focused on family and the community.

WORDS BY MICHAEL McHUGH PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW COFFEY

Welcome to a new era in farming, where the focus is about a sense of community, people and partnerships. Silver Fern farmers, William and Emily Beetham have set

themselves high expectations at Brancepeth, which is one of New Zealand's oldest stations in Wainuioru, situated 15 minutes east from Masterton in the Wairarapa. The attention to detail and focus this young couple have around best practice in farming and building a business is impressive.

The Beetham's new home was built in 2008 and overlooks the Kourarau Hills to the south. As William looks out to the surrounding view, he says, "We have very high expectations within our business and of our people we recruit. They must have similar values, obviously they need certain skill sets, and we look for highly trained individuals. We're more focused on the value set, making sure we can build capability and we can invest in people, it's the value set that's so important to us."

The Beethams believe in recruiting people who are not only open-minded but who are willing to look at things from a fresh perspective. Careful in the selection process in that "we're attracting intelligent, articulate open-minded people," this modern era of farming demands new thinking when it comes to staff.

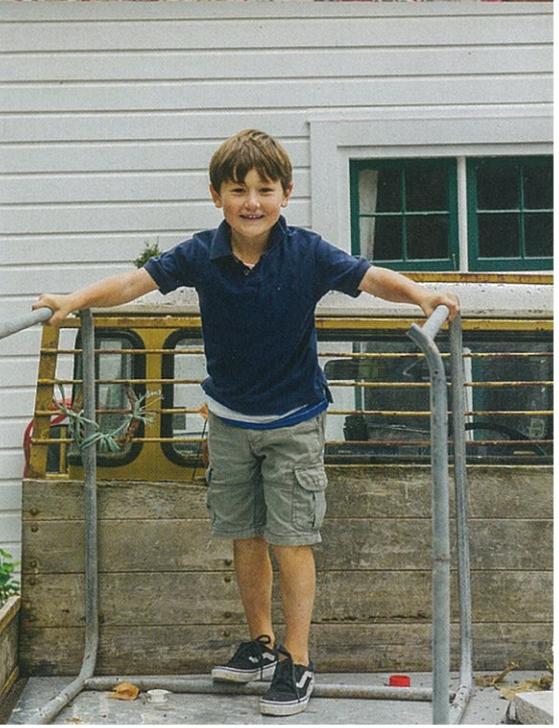
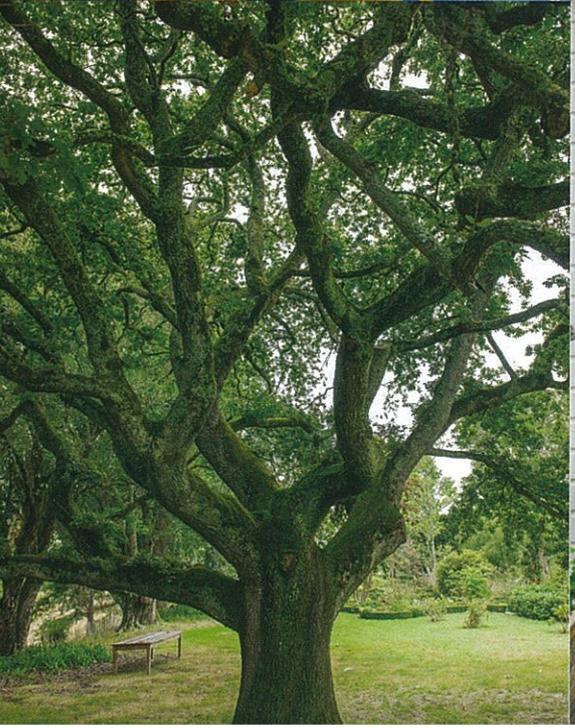
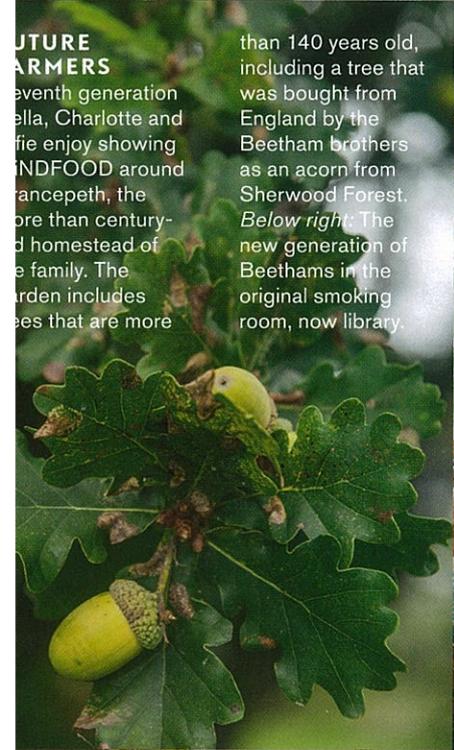
"We have to have people who are like-minded" says Emily. "From the outset, we are really transparent about our expectations, staff are presented with plenty of

"We're attracting intelligent, articulate open-minded people."

— William Beetham

information and support so they can perform to their best ability." As well as attracting people with top abilities, the couple themselves are continually developing their own. There have been many learnings along the way for them both. "William has learnt to be patient" Emily says with a smile, "he was the most impatient person – he wanted everything done yesterday. Everything he could see himself reaching for he wanted to have done by next week."

William says there have been many times where running the farm has been difficult, and he has never shied away from a solution to do things better, such as connecting with farmer mentor, John Canning from Tanui as mentor. "He's been fantastic because he came into the business and he recognised the impatience in me. He also recognised the fact that I wasn't a great person to stop and smell the roses." This is a common problem for any ambitious focused business owner – appreciating the things that had been achieved. "All the things we talked about that are probably classic in young guys at work. He saw that I was a worrier and I'd ▶



FUTURE FARMERS
 seventh generation
 ella, Charlotte and
 fie enjoy showing
 ANDFOOD around
 rancepeth, the
 ore than century-
 d homestead of
 e family. The
 rden includes
 es that are more

than 140 years old,
 including a tree that
 was bought from
 England by the
 Beetham brothers
 as an acorn from
 Sherwood Forest.
Below right: The
 new generation of
 Beethams in the
 original smoking
 room, now library.

STORYTELLER

Ed Beetham, pictured with trusted companion Labrador Beau, is the historian of the family and sits in the Smoking Room, where last century Chief Piripi would sit in the sun in the corner behind him on the handmade chaise lounge, declining to sleep upstairs.

worry about things not being right.” This revelation showed William the need of taking time out to appreciate the small wins, and focusing on what’s really important in the business long-term.

RELATIONS & OPERATIONS

“Understanding the relationships of people in the business, John has been awesome in that part of the process. He just gave me lots of things to think about. He started off with ‘3 by 3 by 3’ rule – you plan three days of work a week, because on the farm, if you fill up every day and things can go wrong, you’ll never get done what you wanted to achieve.”

Then, on the long-term operations side of the business – as opposed to the day-to-day routines – three weeks were planned out so contractors and staff are organised. “What you do in a farming business right now,” says William, “has impact in three months’ time, which means you need to be planning three months in advance. In planning that way, any strategic changes take three years to manifest and come to fruition in the

“They would make a bed for Chief Piripi upstairs but he would prefer to fall asleep in the corner.”

– Ed Beetham

business, so pieces of wisdom like that have been invaluable.” Working with Canning “has been fantastic in terms of pulling things back, realising the beast we have created, how to tame it and how to move forward with maturity and learning,” says William, who has known Canning for eight years. They meet every two to three months.

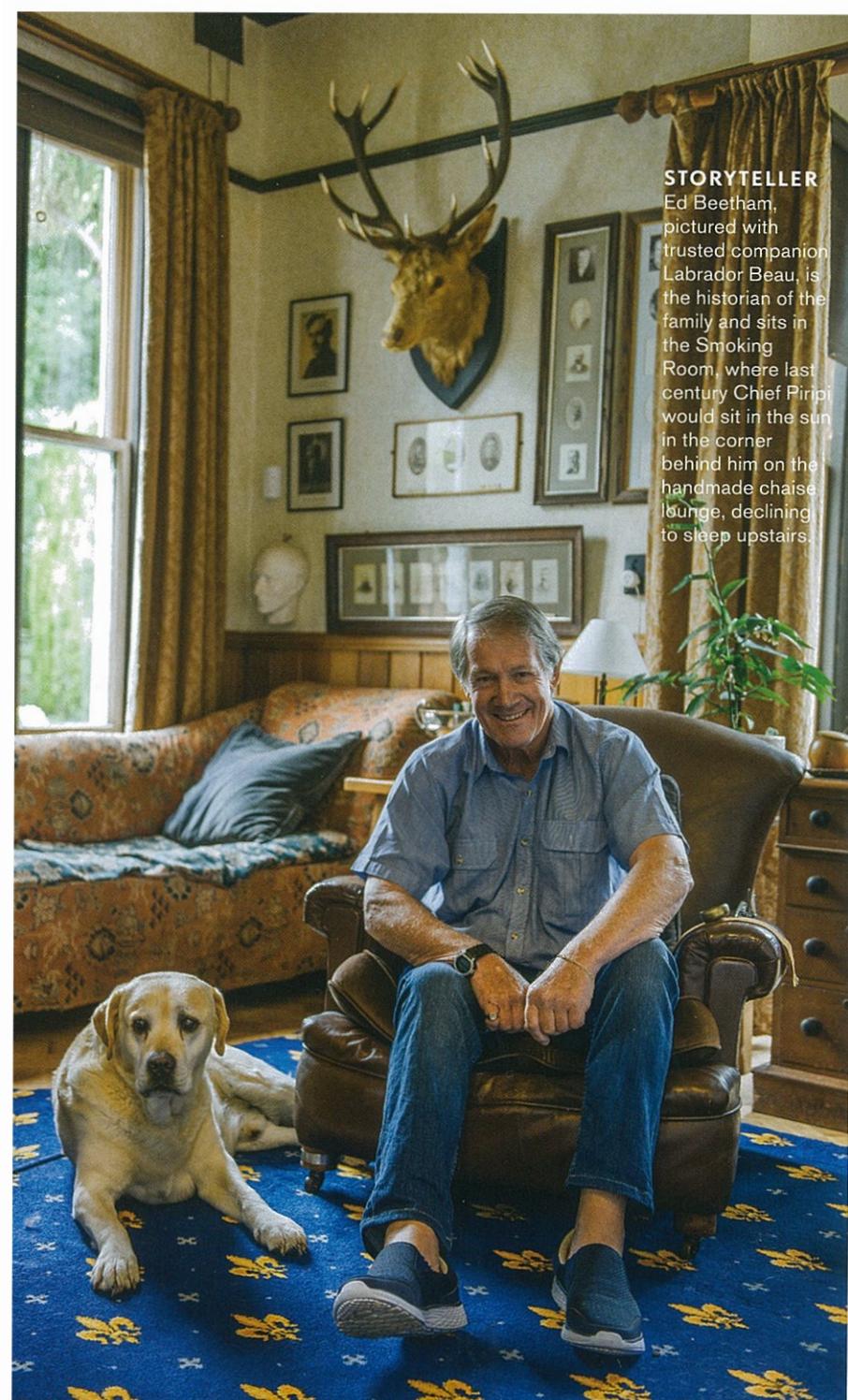
There is however another sense of responsibility that swirls around this couple, a responsibility that is not taken lightly and which is steeped very much in that sense of community and partnership.

ORIGINS OF THE HOME

The story of Brancepeth begins with the Beetham brothers Richmond, William and George who built the original whare in 1857, which still proudly stands today. While working on the homestead a wild boar walked out of the bush and through the construction site. The brothers knew of Brancepeth (Brawns Path) in England and decided that was to be the name for their new property.

The whare is made from sawn totara with a split totara shingle roof, all the joints are pegged, with no nails used in the building. Later joined by younger brother Hugh, the four brothers lived in the whare for two years while their farm business started and built the first station homestead.

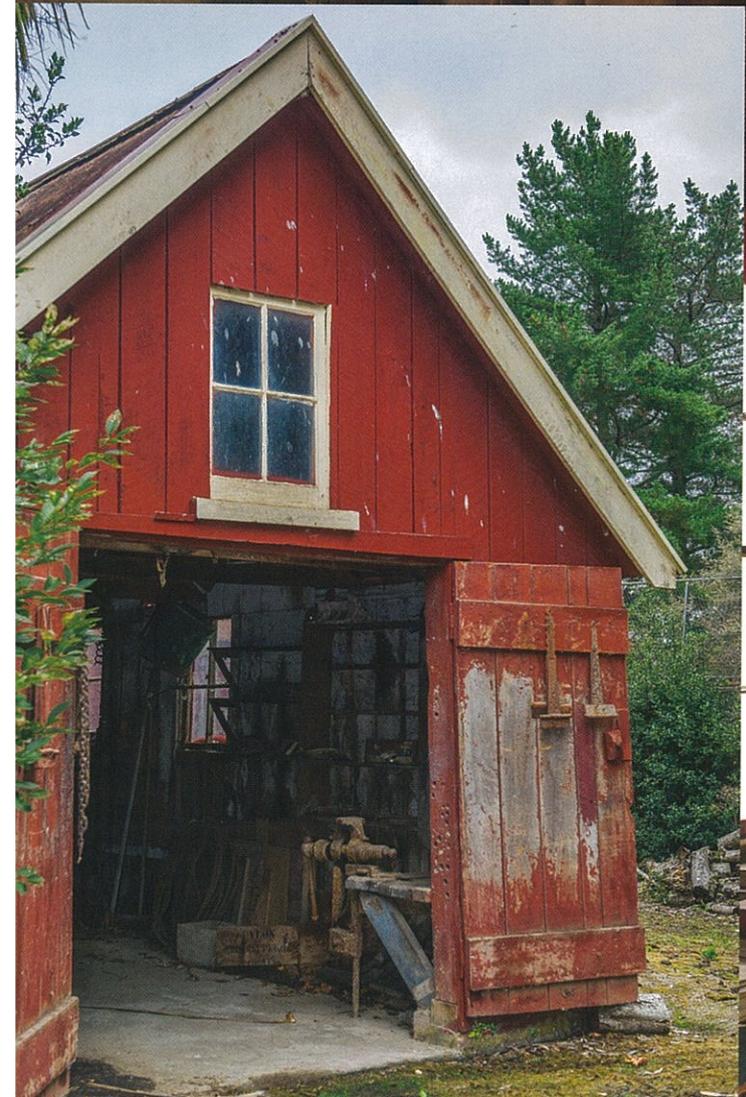
The 32-room Brancepeth homestead was added to from an original structure built in 1856 and is registered with Heritage New Zealand, with its highest ranking, Category 1. The original house was built of totara but was pulled down after sustaining dry rot, borer ▶



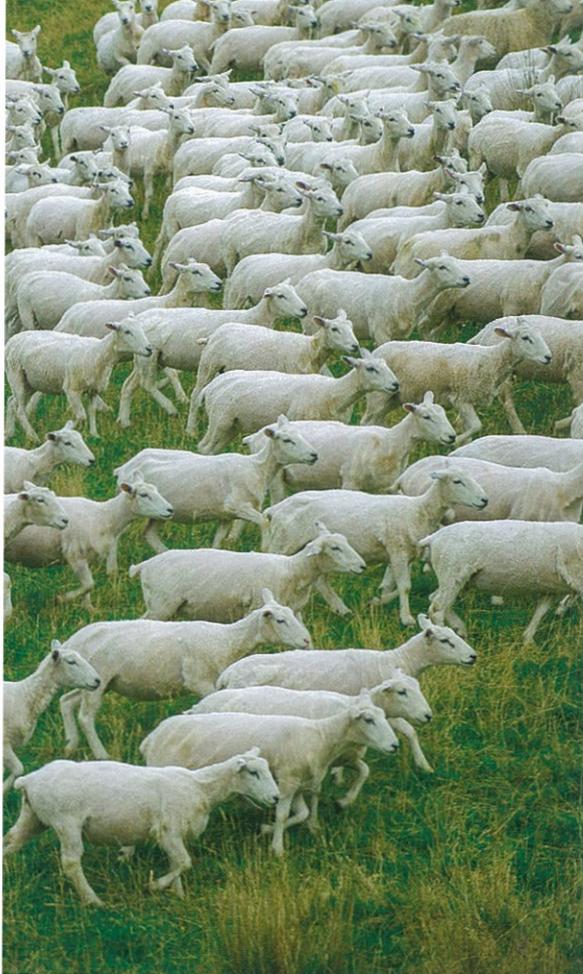


DIRECT MAIL

Top left & bottom right: The Post Office where over 30,000 letters would pass through within a year. Power didn't come to Brancepeth till 1957 so gaslight was the only available source of light. All records and furniture have been kept and in place as they once were. *Top right & bottom left:* The whare was the original building the Beetham brothers built and lived in where a wild boar ran out of the bush during construction giving the homestead its name Brancepeth (Brawns Path). The totara slates in the roof are original. No nails were used in the building's construction.



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 BOOKBINDERS, LITHOGRAPHERS
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 JANUARY
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Kiwi feathered cloaks were presented to subsequent new generation of Beetham's at their christenings as a mark of mutual respect. It is the new generation at Brancepeth who is now at the forefront of that responsibility, and their thinking is exciting.

SILVER FERN FARMS & THE BEETHAMS

William believes it's "absolutely crucial" to create strong partnerships and believe in the vision of the people who are selling their product.

"We believe in what Silver Fern Farms are doing. We wouldn't be able to build the strong relationship we have otherwise, and have the confidence to invest to grow our business that meets, not only minimum best legislative requirements, but actually steps out further to operate in best practice," says William.

"The way Silver Fern Farms is operating with its plate-to-pasture strategy, we talk about that with our team because they have to believe in it too. It's really important that everybody believes in the strategy and the vision of what they're doing."

He says, "Our team needs to see and believe in the process and the people trying to do things better, who have a clear vision for the industry and for the future."

"Silver Fern Farms can put our product in markets and create connections, and people can see value in connecting with us and this process will add value to our product," says William.

He continues, "That process, which has a long-term aspect to it, is hugely beneficial in terms of being able to say that the value that surrounds our product in the market has a sustainable return to us – and that's where the real value sits, not product based on a supply-demand commodity market process."

This attitude and thinking with a long-term strategy and plan in mind sets not only the business up with a strong platform for growth, but continues to build on long-term partnerships like with Silver Fern Farms.

LOOKING AHEAD

William and Emily have high expectations for themselves and a respect for their surrounding environment. "It's not about the perfect game," says William. "It's about the perfect effort."

Treasuring rural community relationships, they consider all aspects of the environment in all their decision-making. "Yes, we are committed to maintaining where practicable, enhancing the quality of soil, water, flora and fauna, respecting our animals and accepting responsibility for their welfare and recognising their dependency on our actions," he says.

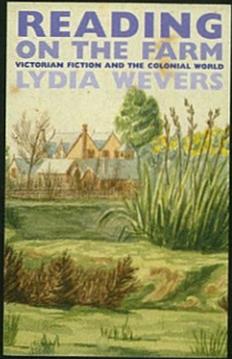
"We have high expectations, and therefore must uphold the highest standards and be open and honest. It is also always about the people." And this attitude is something all generations of the Beetham family clearly understood. **MF**

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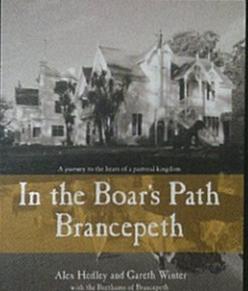
VISIT Read more at mindfood.com about Silver Fern Farmers such as William and Emily Beetham.

KEYWORDS: Silver Fern Farms

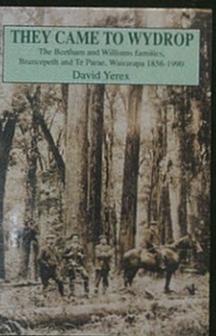
BRANCEPETH RECORDED



READING ON THE FARM
Lydia Wevers
Victoria University Press
 A detailed collated history of books and intellectual life in colonial New Zealand.



IN THE BOAR'S PATH BRANCEPETH
Alex Hedley & Gareth Winter
Hedley's Books
 A beautiful photographic hardback book on the history of Brancepeth.



THEY CAME TO WYDROP
David Yerex
 Hugh Beetham's and Tom Williams's study of diaries, letters and ledges has resulted in this history of pioneer farming families.

Brancepeth a rare experience, providing a glimpse into the dawn of pastoralism in New Zealand's colonial life and the forefront of the countries emerging society. William's dad Ed who is the historian within the family mentions items of interest as he walks through the home, pointing to different paintings that generations of the Beetham family have painted, furniture that arrived from different continents and rooms filled with books and artefacts.

"Maori Chief Piripi would sit over there," he said, pointing to the sun-drenched chaise lounge in the corner of the smoking room by the window. "They would make a bed for him upstairs but he would prefer to fall asleep in the corner there on that hand-knitted sofa."

Each generation of the Beetham family learnt to speak Maori, as close relationships with local iwi ensuring no inter-racial conflict occurred over the years.

“We believe in what Silver Fern Farms are doing, otherwise we wouldn’t be able to build what we’re doing and try to operate a best practice business.”

– William Beetham



ON THE FARM

Shepherd Olivia Boos, pictured with dogs Queen and Cruz, grew up in Rotorua. Boos says she originally, “worked with the Beethams over summer a few years back, and now is back full-time after graduating from university.” Emily Beetham says Olivia has, along with all their staff, “the intelligence, capability and the hardworking attitude.”

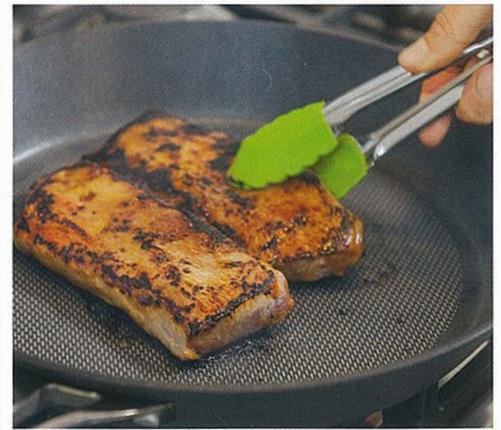
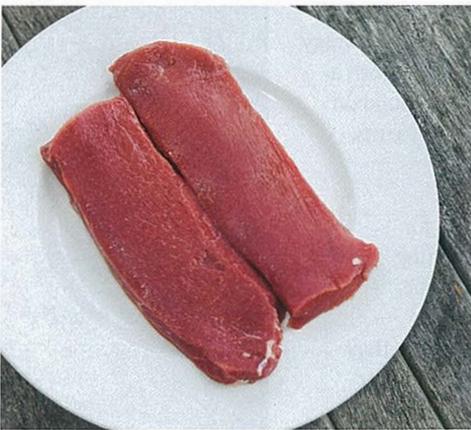
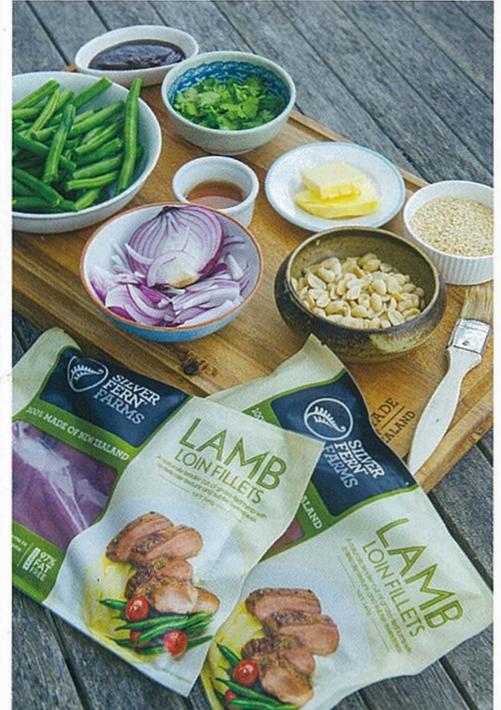
Luscious Lamb Salad

As the days grow shorter and the nights grow longer, this simple yet tantalising autumn salad is a hearty satisfying meal to prepare that the whole family will enjoy. Pair it with the right seasonal ingredients to really bring out the succulent taste of Silver Fern Farm's meltably tender meat.

RECIPE BY EMILY BEETHAM PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW COFFEY



ENTICINGLY APPETISING
MINDFOOD food director Michelle McHugh (right) and Silver Fern Farmer Emily Beetham toss up a warm lamb salad.



Tempting Lamb Meals to Warm You in the Cooler Weather

By combining the best ingredients the season has to offer with melt-in-the-mouth tender Silver Fern Farms Lamb, you'll be able to create a delicious range of dishes from around the world without leaving your kitchen.

OLIVES

Both olives and olive oil are great ingredients to use in lamb dishes to enhance the meat's flavour. The combination is a staple of many cuisines, particularly Mediterranean food.

EGGPLANT

The naturally mild flavour and spongy texture of eggplant makes it the perfect accompaniment to lamb. The two ingredients are often used together in Turkish and Moroccan dishes.

LEMONS

Lamb is a naturally lean meat, and most cuisines recognise the need for an acidic ingredient or a sauce to 'cut' through this. Lemons offer a fresh and easy way to get this balance.

CAPSICUMS

Vegetables that have some sweetness such as capsicums, work well with the slightly sweet flavours that can be found in lamb. Combine the two in a stew for a delicious meal.

ROSEMARY

Lamb is a robust-flavoured meat and, consequently, works well with strongly flavoured seasonings. Rosemary is the perfect, in-season herb to provide an aromatic partner to any lamb dish.



**SILVER
FERN
FARMS**

Hoisin Lamb Loin Fillet with Green Bean Salad

Serves 4

- 1 pack Silver Fern Farms Lamb Loin Fillets
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsp hoisin sauce

Green Bean Salad

- 30g butter, melted
- 300g green beans
- Half a small red onion, finely sliced
- 100g peanuts
- 2 tsp sesame seeds, toasted
- 1/4 cup coriander leaves

Remove the Silver Fern Farms Lamb Loin Fillets from the packaging and allow to come to room temperature. Brush the lamb with combined sesame oil and hoisin sauce. Preheat a non-stick pan to moderately hot. Cook the lamb for 3-4 minutes each side or until medium-rare. Rest the lamb for a few minutes before serving.

To make the salad, melt the butter in a pan, add beans and onion and cook until beans are just tender. To assemble, place the beans and onions on a serving plate. Add peanuts. To serve, slice the lamb diagonally and serve on top of the warm salad. Garnish with the sesame seeds and coriander.



SILVER FERN FARMS

Lamb Loin Fillets

Make every meal restaurant quality using Silver Fern Farm's Lamb Loin Fillets, which uses a cut that is known and loved by chefs and home cooks alike. Naturally tender with a delicate texture and subtle sweetness, not only does it taste incredible, but it's 97 per cent fat free and an excellent source of zinc.

Delicious Ways with Lamb



TANDOORI LAMB LOIN FILLET SALAD



LAMB WITH BABA GHANOUSH SALAD



MOROCCAN LAMB WITH COUSCOUS

MINDFOOD.COM

VISIT To see food director Michelle McHugh and Silver Fern farmer Emily Beetham make this salad, go to mindfood.com.

KEYWORDS: Lamb, Salad, Silver Fern Farms