

Product specification for Gower Salt Marsh Lamb

A protected designation of origin (PDO)

Responsible country: Great Britain

GB number: F0082

This document sets out the elements of the product specification for information purposes.

Competent authority

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Applicant group

Name: Gower Salt Marsh Lamb Group

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Composition: Producers/processors 6 Other 1

Type of product (as in Annex XI Implementing Regulation 668/2014)

Class 1.1 Fresh Meat (and offal)

1. Product name(s)

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb'

2. Description

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' is prime lamb that is born reared and slaughtered on the Gower peninsular in South Wales. It is the unique vegetation and environment of the salt marshes on the north Gower coastline, where the lambs graze, which gives the meat its distinctive characteristics.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' is a seasonal product available from June until the end of December. There is no restriction on which breeds (or x breeds) of sheep can be used to produce 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb'. However, the breeds which are the most suitable, are hardy, lighter more agile breeds which thrive well on the salt marsh vegetation.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' is aged between 4 to 10 months at time of slaughter. All lambs must spend at least 50% of their life (which must be at least a minimum 2 months) grazing the salt marsh although some lambs will graze the salt marsh for up to 8 months.

The lambs are, extensively reared and are naturally "fit" animals, grazing over long distances on the saltmarshes. This contributes to the specific characteristics of 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb', producing a slower maturing lamb, achieving the optimum balance of lean meat to fat with "consistent distribution and configuration of fat marbling throughout the muscle fibres". Leg joints are well defined with good muscle conformation and the raw meat is dark red in colour.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' has a carcass weight at slaughter between 16-23kgs deadweight. 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' is EUROP carcass classified as 2L to 3L fat class and U to O conformation with the majority of lambs classifying as R conformation and fat class 3L.

When cooked (as described by an independent sensory analysis panel) 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' delivers a "well rounded lamb flavour that is mild, sweet, and delicate with grassy, herby slightly salty fresh notes and leaves a pleasant savoury lamb residual aftertaste in the mouth". The fat (which is well distributed and, remains visible when cooked) is creamy in colour and renders during cooking to leave a clean non greasy texture on the palate. The lamb has a "sweet subtle aroma and is tender and succulent". When assessed by a texture analyser, 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' maintained muscle fibre integrity which correlates to "succulence on first bite".

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' can be sold either in carcass or cuts of meat. Preferably it should be sold and eaten when fresh, although the meat may be frozen.

3. Geographical area

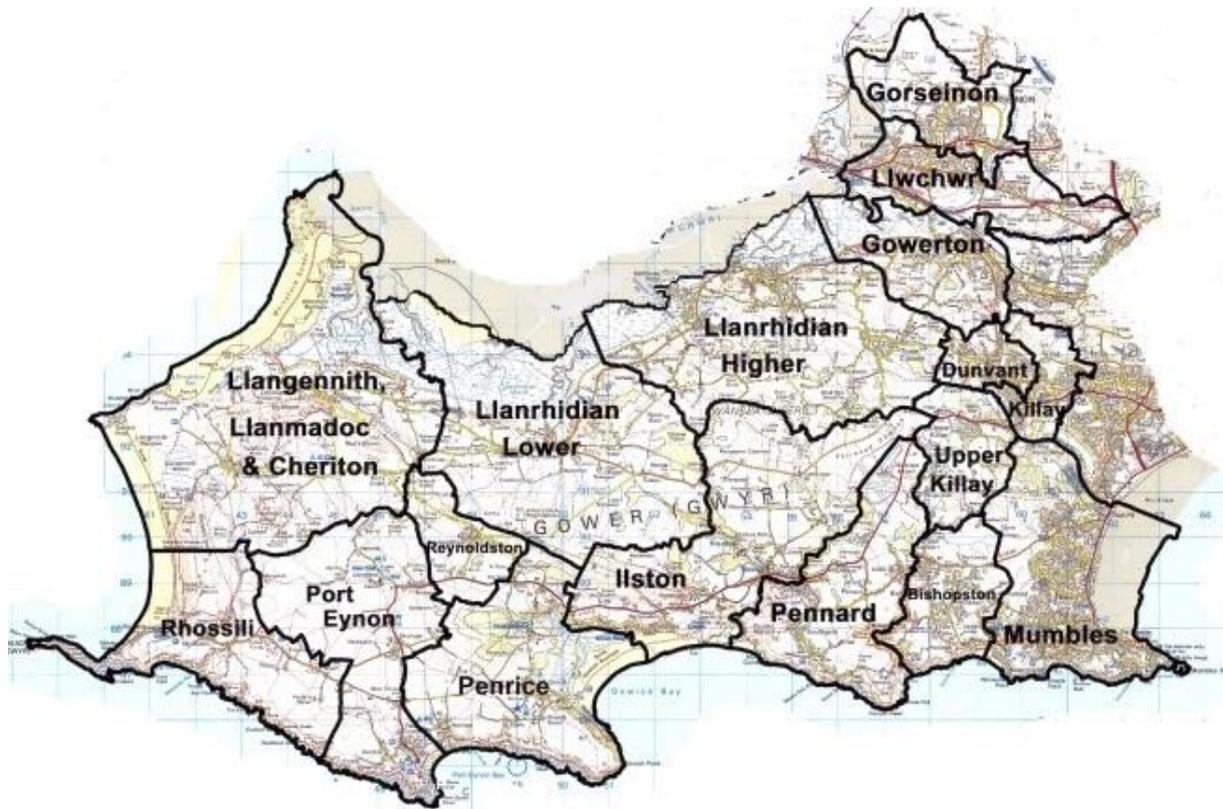
The Gower Peninsular

The Gower Peninsular in South Wales as demarcated by the electoral constituency boundaries listed below and as shown in Map A;-

- Gorseinon
- Llwrchrwr
- Gowerton
- Dunvant
- Killay
- Upper Killay
- Mumbles
- Bishopston
- Pennard
- Llanrhidian Higher
- Llanrhidian Lower
- Ilston
- Penrice
- Reynoldstone
- Port Eynon
- Rhossili
- Llangennith
- Llanmadoc
- Cheriton

Map A

The Gower Peninsular showing electoral constituency boundaries



The Gower Peninsular includes the coastal salt marshes on the northern coastline of the peninsular as shown in Map B below:

Map B Showing the north Gower salt marshes



As can be seen from the map above, in totality, these salt marshes cover an area east of Whitford Burrows to the Loughor Bridge on the A484. This area comprises of:-

- 1) Llanrhidian and Landimore salt marsh – east of Whitford Burrows to Salt house Point

Whitford Burrows		Salthouse Point	
Co-ordinates		Co-ordinates	
OS X (Eastings)	244680	OS X (Eastings)	252330
OS Y (Northings)	195115	OS Y (Northings)	195847
Nearest Post Code	SA3 1DL	Nearest Post Code	SA4 3SN
Lat (WGS84)	N51:38:00	Lat (WGS84)	N51:38:31
(51.633343)		(51.641982)	
Long (WGS84)	W4:14:44 (-	Long (WGS84)	W4:08:08 (-
4.245646)		4.135504)	
Lat,Long	51.633343,-4.245646	Lat,Long	51.641982,-4.135504
Nat Grid	SS446951 /	Nat Grid	SS523958 /
SS4468095115		SS5233095847	

- 2) Penclawdd and Crofty salt marsh – from Salthouse Point to the Loughor Bridge

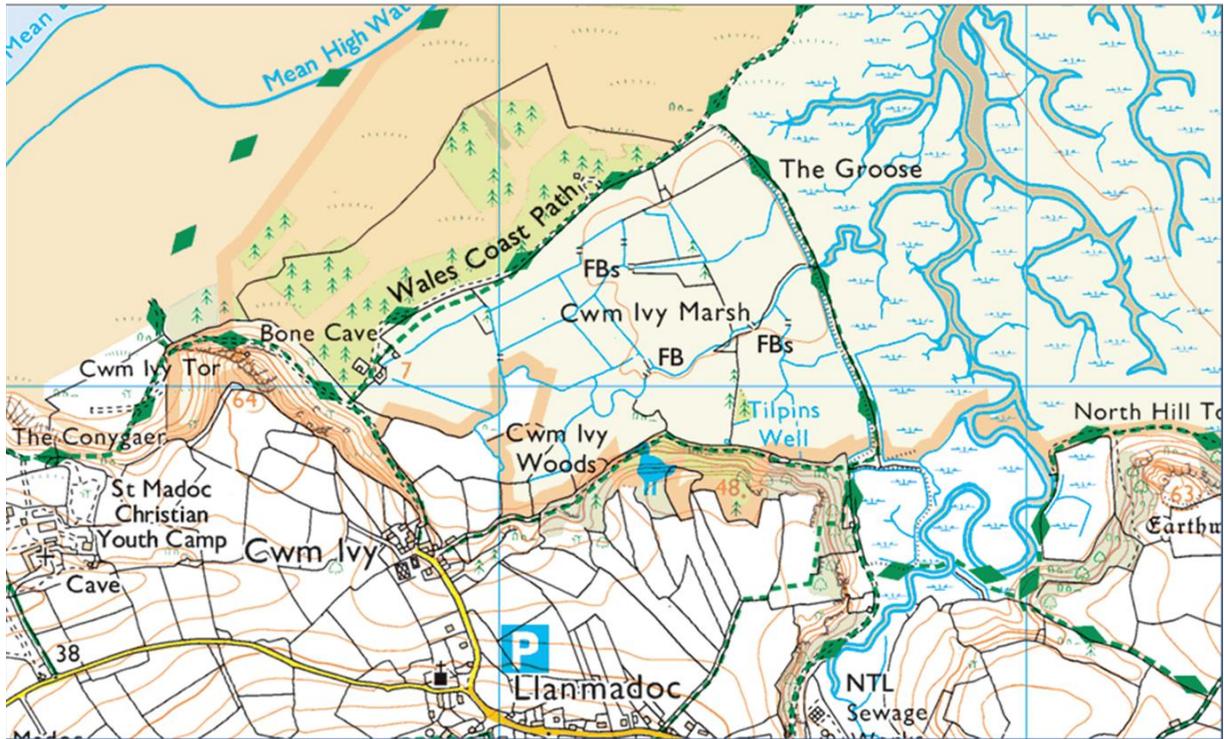
Salthouse Point	Loughor Bridge
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Co-ordinates	Co-ordinates
OS X (Eastings) 252330	OS X (Eastings) 256120
OS Y (Northings) 195847	OS Y (Northings) 198082
Nearest Post Code SA4 3SN	Nearest Post Code SA4 6TP
Lat (WGS84) N51:38:31 (51.641982)	Lat (WGS84) N51:39:47 (51.663047)
Long (WGS84) W4:08:08 (- 4.135504)	Long (WGS84) W4:04:54 (- 4.081691)
Lat,Long 51.641982,-4.135504	Lat,Long 51.663047,-4.081691
Nat Grid SS523958 / SS5233095847	Nat Grid SS561980 / SS5612098082

3) Cwm Ivy saltmarsh - as shown outlined dark blue on Map B and Map C below.

Co-ordinates
OS X (Eastings) 244220
OS Y (Northings) 194094
Nearest Post Code SA3 1DL
Lat (WGS84) N51:37:27 (51.624043)
Long (WGS84) W4:15:07 (- 4.251832)
Lat,Long 51.624043,-4.251832
Nat Grid SS442940 / SS4422094094

Map C Cwm Ivy salt marsh



4. Proof of origin

At all stages of production, records are kept to provide a complete audit trail and full traceability from farm to final consumer. Each 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' (whether it is in carcass or cut meat form) can be traced back to the farm from where it came by reference to producers holding numbers, lamb electronic identification (EID) and OS grid reference of slaughterhouse location.

All 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' must be produced on Farm Assured farms or similar.

All 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' is produced from holdings located on the Gower peninsular. This is identified by a holding number which is allocated to each farm holding by the Welsh Government.

All 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' must spend at least 50% of their life (which must be at least a minimum 2 months) grazing the salt marshes on the north Gower coastline and are born from ewes that have themselves been reared on these salt marshes for a minimum of 3 months.

Traceability and time spent grazing the saltmarsh is recorded by on farm flock inspections by external auditors and from producers using Electronic Identification (EID). EID records the exact times lambs (and ewes) have been grazing the marshes and records dates of lambs (and ewes) moving from farm to salt marsh and vice versa. Recording stock movement is a legal requirement.

When not grazing the saltmarshes, the lambs must remain on holdings located on the Gower peninsular, as recorded by the farms holding number.

When grazing common land, all 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' producers must keep to their individual common land grazing rights management agreements.

The grazing rights are administered and monitored by Natural Resource Wales (Welsh Government) and specify the following; -

- Name, address, holding number of the producer
- Which salt marsh each producer can graze his stock
- Type of stock
- Numbers of stock allowed on the marsh

All forage both grazed and conserved must come from the designated area and the intention is to source 100% of all feed. However, in exceptional circumstances bought in feed up to a maximum of 25% annual dry matter is allowed. This is audited by grazing and conservation records and recording evidence of feed inputs imported onto the farm by producer diaries.

All slaughtering and processing of 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' must take place within the designated area.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' ranges from a minimum of 16kg to a maximum of 23kgs (deadweight). This will be recorded and disseminated to 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' producers by the abattoir.

All 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' must be slaughtered in approved FSA abattoirs or similar located within the designated area and identified by a unique code to ensure traceability.

All lambs are slaughtered in accordance with Meat and Livestock Commission specifications, or equivalent.

All abattoirs maintain their own records to ensure traceability of each batch of 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' passing through the abattoir.

The abattoir provides each producer sending their lamb for slaughter with a unique vendor number to ensure traceability from fork to farm.

5. Method of production

All 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' are born and reared on Farm Assured (or similar) holdings located on the Gower peninsular and slaughtered in abattoir(s) located on the Gower peninsular.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' graze the maritime salt marshes of the north Gower coastline for a minimum of at least 50% of their life (which must be at least a minimum 2 months) although some spend as much as 8 months. The exact length of time will vary according to lambing season. If lambs are temporarily removed from the salt marshes for example due to flooding and high tides, the lambs must remain on land/holdings within the designated area.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' are born from ewes that have themselves been reared on the salt marsh for a minimum of 3 months. This ensures that the ewe becomes acclimatized to the unique salt marsh environment.

Regardless of whether the lambs are grazing the saltmarshes or on individual Gower farm holdings, producers **must** adhere to **all** mandatory and/or voluntary agri environmental management agreements which apply.

Any breed (or x breed) of sheep can be used to produce 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' but those animals chosen are usually the hardy, lighter more agile breeds, such as Suffolk x, Speckle faced x and Beulahs. These breeds, have good feet, thrive well on the salt marsh vegetation (without requiring supplementary concentrate feeding) and have adapted to walking on waterlogged land and traversing across the numerous water channels.

All forage (both grazed and conserved), is derived from the designated geographical area. The intention is to source 100% of all feed from the designated area and to finish all the lambs off grass. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as adverse weather, high tides or flooding limiting supply or access to forage) bought in feed up to a maximum of 25% annual dry matter is allowed.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' is slaughtered locally within the defined geographical area. Reduced travel time to slaughterhouse helps preserve the distinct characteristics of the meat by reducing stress during the transfer to the slaughterhouse which could otherwise cause deterioration of meat quality.

6. Link with the geographical area

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' has the reputation of being a quality product that is born reared and slaughtered on the Gower peninsular in South Wales. It is a seasonal product available from June until the end of December.

The lamb is produced from an extensive traditional system of farming where the characteristics and qualities of the final product are influenced by the following 2 key contributory factors; -

- The lamb's natural diet which consists of grazing the unique saltmarsh vegetation found on the north Gower coastline.
- Knowledge and skill base of producers which has developed and remained relatively unchanged for generations.

The salt marsh environment

The Gower peninsular lies to the West of Swansea jutting out into the Bristol Channel. In 1956, the entire Gower peninsular was designated Great Britain's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (A.O.B.).

The saltmarshes on Gower, are located on the northern shores of the peninsular covering approximately 4000 acres of land and constituting 22% of Welsh saltmarsh resource. Llanrhidian & Landimore, and Penclawdd & Crofty salt marshes are designated Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), SSSI's and Special Protection Areas (SPA's).

The vegetation present on these salt marshes, is influenced by its soil and climate.

Gower has a mild climate with maritime influence, avoiding the more extremes of heat and cold that can occur elsewhere in the UK. Its climate is moderated by the prevailing south westerly winds coming off the Atlantic Ocean and from the Bristol Channel. Sea temperatures which range from an average of 9° C in February to 17° C in July have a major moderating influence on the air temperature of the Gower peninsular. Gower has an average annual rainfall of 1100mm.

Soil salinity determines the type of plants which grow on saltmarshes, and its pH content accounts for the actual distribution of the vegetation present. Gower salt marshes are naturally acidic with a typical pH of 4. A particular feature of Gower salt marshes is their relatively high sand content which makes them characteristically well drained. Unlike other salt marshes, this high sand content is a major factor for the occurrence and unique

abundance of salt marsh grasses enabling the salt marshes to be a valuable grazing resource for sheep and lambs.

The salt marshes have a strong representation of mid and upper marsh plant communities and for the two habitat categories listed under Annex 1 of the EC Habitats and Species directive which are:

- Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Atlantic Salt Meadows

There is a unique range of halophytic (salt tolerant) plants, dominated by saltmarsh saline resistant grasses which include *Spartinetum townsendii* saltmarsh grass/seashore alkali grass *Puccinella maritima* red fescue *Festuca Rubra*. Other plants include sorrel, sea lavender, sea purslane, thrift, glasswort, and sea rush.

Cwm Ivy Salt Marsh, (privately owned by the National Trust) is a newly created salt marsh following the breach of sea defences in 2013. This salt marsh comprises predominantly of “Atlantic saltmeadow” vegetation, such as Salicornia (samphire) species, sea blight, thrift, scurvey grass and sea spurrey. Cwm Ivy is a designated SSSI.

Knowledge and skill base

Due to the challenges of raising lambs in this environment, specific skills and knowledge are essential to the rearing and production of ‘Gower Salt Marsh Lamb’. These specific skills, knowledge and traditions have developed over time and been passed down from one generation to the next.

The particular skills associated with ‘Gower Salt Marsh Lamb’ production are listed below. These highlight the specific skills of farming a physically challenging terrain often in adverse weather; -

- Knowledge and understanding of the salt marsh and its tidal ranges to protect sheep and lambs against the danger of rising tides. The producer’s work revolves around tides and the tide table which dictates the timing of all major jobs. It is essential that each producer relies and refers frequently to their tide book
- Knowledge of choosing and utilising sheep breeds (and crosses) that can cope with the physical constraints and challenges of grazing the salt marsh with its myriad of deep channels that dissect the marsh. Hardy agile animals are selected which have good feet and are suited to moving on unstable often waterlogged land.
- Knowledge of the salt marsh and greater reliance on shepherding skills to manage sheep and lambs on the saltmarsh with its large vast expanses of open areas dissected by deep channels restricting sheep movement. As large areas of the terrain can only be accessible on foot, shepherds have to rely on their dog working skills.

- Grazing management and knowledge of the salt marsh and its unique saltmarsh vegetation to optimise lamb growth to match the availability and cycle of its vegetation.

No artificial fertilisers or chemicals are permitted to be used on these salt marshes which necessitates that the salt marshes are grazed at low stocking rates compared to more intensive lamb production systems. The requirement to anthelmintic treat lambs grazing the salt marshes is less, due to the lower stocking rates practiced.

Light grazing provides structural diversity, whilst still allowing grazing intolerant plants to persist. The feed value of the marshes is low compared to agriculturally improved grassland. 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb's forage over large open expanses of land producing a lean carcass with good muscle development and well-defined leg joints.

This extensive system of grazing (in combination with the factor that the lambs are from pure or x bred hardy breeds of sheep,) results in 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' being slower maturing than more intensively reared lamb. This slowness of growth contributes to the characteristics of the lamb carcass and provides more time for 'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' to fully develop its "well rounded, mild, sweet delicate flavour" with "grassy, herby slightly salty fresh notes" derived from the lamb's diet of a unique combination of salt tolerant plants found on the North Gower Saltmarshes

History

Lambs have been grazing Gower salt marshes since medieval times and in 1583 there was an authorisation allowing tenants from any manor on Gower to graze animals on these marshes (Emery 1957).

In 1833 it was noted that, manufacturing woollen cloth took place in the village of Llanrhidian. This highlights that sheep farming was historically an important industry of the area.

During World War 2, Gower salt marshes were used for sheep grazing and a bridge was built at Llanrhidian Marsh to improve access onto the marsh.

The grazing of Gower salt marshes has changed little over the years and up until the mid-twentieth century in addition to grazing, the marsh reed beds were also harvested for thatch and for sheep and cattle bedding.

In 1976, 30 farmers had grazing rights on Gower salt marshes and these salt marshes supported thousands of sheep and hundreds of ponies, plus cattle and geese. In 2018, approximately 3500 lambs per year from 8 producers are reared on these salt marshes.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' is widely recognised as a quality product both throughout the UK and Europe and is much sought after by visiting tourists. It is highly acclaimed as a niche Welsh delicacy by food critics and chefs and is regularly featured on gourmet television food programmes such as Secret Kitchen and Saturday Kitchen.

'Gower Salt Marsh Lamb' has a reputation of being a quality product and has won numerous awards including:-

- National Trust Fine Farm Produce Awards - 2018/2012/2007
- Great Taste Awards - 2018/2017/2016/2014/2010/2009
- True Taste of Wales Awards – 2007/2009

Quotes

“A glorious piece of meat, sweet and flavoursome. Great fat levels which delivers super flavour.”

“A beautiful looking piece of meat. Lovely colour, and good lamby aroma. Tender to cut, and lots of wonderful flavours in the juices. The depth of flavour and richness of the meat is just wonderful”

Comments from the Great Taste Awards panel of judges

“At Valans we use Gower Salt Marsh Lamb's shoulders and legs. For me the shoulders carry a good level of fat which renders out during the slow cooking process, leaving a good depth of flavour. As for the legs, the sweetness of the meat is the key. I've always put the unique flavour down to the sweet spring salt marsh grasses of the estuary where the lambs graze. Gower Salt Marsh lamb is the only lamb we use on our menu”.

Remy- Valans Restaurant- Llandybie

“Gower Salt Marsh Lamb delivers a well-rounded lamb flavour that is mild, sweet, delicate with grassy, fresh salty notes with no metallic notes and leaves a pleasant savoury- meaty aftertaste in the mouth” Independent Sensory panel Food Industry Centre Cardiff Metropolitan University.

7. Inspection body

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The inspection body conforms to the principles of ISO 17065 standard.

8. Labelling

ENDS

PDO PGI Product specification template PN09 v1 December 2020