

Wagyu... the King of Beef! met its queen

by Bianca Henning



Deja Nienaber started her career as a registered business psychologist, who exchanged her corporate hat for a farming one, focusing on building the Wagyu value chain.

King Wagyu Stud Breeders

As the owner of King Wagyu, Deja is involved in breeding stud animals and producing commercial Wagyu for the beef market. "We have beautiful bulls that we offer in the market. We also produce full-blooded Wagyu embryos at our embryo station. We feedlot finish our commercial cattle to ensure a high-quality beef product, targeting the export market – traditionally in Japan. calves are taken from mothers from a young age and fed a specialised ration for the duration of their lifetime. We are extremely proud of the beef product we've delivered obtaining an average marble score (MS) of 7, and we even had an MS10. Our product is of a high quality, and we strictly implement the Certified Wagyu Beef protocol from the Wagyu Society of South Africa.

Wagyu Society and CWB

Deja is on the Board of Directors of the Wagyu Society of South Africa, overseeing the Marketing role for the past three years. "The South African Wagyu Society has the goal of protecting the Wagyu breed, and secondly making farming profitable for Wagyu breeders, promoting a niche product that earns a premium. This includes implementing an internationally recognised certification program, Certified Wagyu Beef (CWB) to ensure traceability and authenticity. CWB is ethically produced, hormone free, free of routine antibiotics and growth stimulants. Traceability is a



Deja Nienaber, owner of King Wagyu stud breeders.

big benefit, meaning that it can be traced from farm to fork - if you take a DNA sample of the steak you're enjoying, we are able to tell you where it was raised. This makes South African Wagyu beef internationally competitive and gives us an edge over other countries who do not have similar protocols," says Deja.

Wagyu Beef Marketing

Deja is also one of the founding members of Protea Reserve Wagyu Co, a CWB-marketing cooperative, supporting SA Wagyu producers with route-to-market. Protea's vision supports what the Society aims for: An all-inclusive model pushing revenue back to producers by first paying a premium for Wagyu carcasses. With the versatile business model, shareholders can earn dividends, but producers who are not interested in buying shares can earn a dividend for their contribution.

Deja explains why Wagyu is considered the King of Beef:

"Wagyu is internationally a sought-after product. In fact, a Google search will tell you it features in the top 10 of most highly sought-after food items, as well as featuring in this category of one the most expensive."

Wagyu beef not only has this prestigious element, but it has also been shown in research done in America and the University of the Free state to outperform beef products of other cattle breeds. It was shown to have, inter alia, higher levels of mono-unsaturated fat, omega oils, oleic acid, and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA).

It is therefore not surprising that Protea Reserve Wagyu Co won the Beef Brands competition in 2021 where their Wagyu was evaluated for tenderness, juiciness, flavour, and overall liking, and received the Beef Brands Challenge award from the SA Feedlot Association and the African Livestock Trade Fair (ALFA).

Women in agriculture

"The Wagyu industry already has numerous influential women in the value chain, fulfilling key roles, each

relied on for their unique contributions. Women bring a different perspective.

Deja adds: "As mothers, we are the glue which holds families together. In business we also do this. Agriculture provides employment for the majority of population groups all

over the world. It is what ensures that there is food to be put on the table. We need to be the glue in agriculture and build and grow agriculture for our future generations."

Deja highlights an old African proverb which she firmly believes in: If you want to walk fast, walk alone – if you want to walk far, walk together.

"I take leadership from many people, my husband and my father who are both in the agriculture industry, and from others in the Wagyu industry. I am also empowered because of others who believe in me and support me"

Deja concludes: "Surround yourself with people that share your dreams and ideals, listen to good advice, and lead by example in your accomplishments."

For more information about King Wagyu, send an e-mail to deja@kingwagyu.net or contact (+27)-51-492-1852. Visit their website at <http://www.wagyu.org.za/>.