

Zintara CSA Guide

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Zintara is located on the lands of the Taungurung people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and future, as we walk on, learn from and live off these lands. We value the Taungurung tradition of careful, considered custodianship of these lands, and are grateful for this as we try to follow in their footsteps.



Introduction

Zintara is a 2400 acre farm located on Taungurung Country, around 75 minutes north of Melbourne. Right at the edge of the Great Dividing Range, the Zintara landscape is a beautiful collage of impossible granite bouldery and ancient gum trees, located in a narrow valley where the floodplain quickly runs up to steep hills, often enshrouded in unyielding winter mists. It is home to James, Jess, Rex, Spike, our herd of Black Angus cattle, our growing herd of Boer goats and myriad species of flora and fauna (native and otherwise). In short, we operate a medium scale farm that tries to balance ecology, (European) human occupation, animal husbandry and financial stability.

Zintara Values

- A belief (backed up with a whole lot of observation) in the power of nature and its ability to heal and regenerate.
- A belief that we can and should contribute to this process
- The food we eat does not have to compromise between our own nourishment and care for the landscape. The best farming achieves both—landscape management that produces

healthier, more delicious food, and food production that enhances the ecology of which it is a part

- Delicious ethical food has a positive impact on everything it touches, from the sky right down to the soil microbiota
- The most meaningful connections are made over food

Zintara Principles

Animal welfare

- Calm, low-stress handling of animals
- Calves stay with their mothers for the first year of life
- Species appropriate diet of diverse perennial grasses and legumes
- No prophylactic drenching, hormones or antibiotics

Regenerative management

- Paddocks are rested for at least 6 months, usually a year, sometimes longer
- We view the animal as an agent of regeneration, not a unit of production. Their job is to help cycle carbon, fertilise the soil and stimulate growth
- Frequent herd moves and long paddock rests make for healthy animals, healthy soil and regenerating ecologies
- Use of goats for control of invasive weeds and nutrient redistribution, balancing our grazers with our foragers

No inputs

- Zero use of herbicides, fungicides, pesticides or fertilisers
- Zero irrigation
- No spraying, tilling, ploughing, cultivating or seeding
- Cattle are 100% pasture-fed their entire lives; no grain, no pellets

Healthy, nutrient dense, delicious produce

- See above 'No inputs' and 'Animal welfare'
- See <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35127297/>

Our thoughts on common food labels (and why we choose not to be certified)

- **Regenerative:** is a broad term that indicates farmers who are questioning conventional farming and implementing alternative management that focus on living soil and its repair. This is where our farming journey began.
- **Pasture raised:** yes, 100% always. But natural pasture; not heavily fertilised, seasonally 'renovated' monocultural pasture with attendant animal, soil health and water table issues
- **Organic:** a guarantee that food does not contain synthetic inputs. However, no active landscape regeneration is required for certification. Certification is expensive and as such 'organic' has become a commoditised label unattainable for most small-scale producers
- **Grass fed:** this can now be obtained by feeding cattle 'certified' grass pellets
- **Sustainably farmed:** we don't rely on any inputs and aim for closed loop production and rebuilding soil health

- **Biodynamic:** We align in viewing the farm as a dynamic system to be nurtured back to health. We have not explored its input practices or preparations.
- **Carbon neutral:** There are a number of questionable practices in this area. At worst it enables continued land degradation by allowing farmers to offset big polluters or their own poor practice in one area with carbon farming projects in another. There is also the absurdity of claiming offsets for not clearing land. However, improving soil carbon has been a key goal for Zintara, as it's a good indicator of healthy soil. Likewise we support any program that encourages farmers to nurture a healthy resilient landscape with an abundance of diverse plant growth. This is the important distinction, while meaningful carbon abatement should be integrated into land management and production systems, not used as greenwashing to enable the status quo. So we aim to be transparent about our emissions and how they are balanced by our ecological management. Watch this space.

Maintaining manageable scale

- Allowing us to stay engaged with the health of the landscape and;
- Engaged with CSA members and;
- Lead a fulfilling life with time for things around farming

Future goals

- On-farm micro abattoir and butchery
- Carbon auditing
- Incorporate goat meat into CSA for those interested - goat meat has been available since April 2025
- Integrated agroforestry for increased biodiversity, landscape and soil health, wildlife habitat and emissions abatement.

What is a CSA?

Our CSA will involve a monthly commitment from us to supply you with delicious, ethical and ecologically sound meat, and a monthly commitment from you to 'accept the produce' and pay us directly for it.

An initial 6 month commitment is appreciated. See [What your CSA membership will enable](#)

Community Supported Agriculture, aka 'CSA' and/or 'Teikei' was developed in Japan in the 1970s as a way to link farmers with consumers in direct relationships, such that they share in the ups, downs, ins and outs of food production, distributing and mitigating the financial and climatic risk inherent to farming and sidestepping the commodification of food and all those exploitative middle men (such as our 'big two' supermarkets). CSA is an empowering acknowledgement of our mutual dependence.

Principles of Teikei

Principle of **mutual assistance**

Principle of **accepting the produce**

Principle of **mutual concession in the price decision**

Principle of **deepening friendly relationships**

Principle of **self-distribution**

Principle of **democratic management**
Principle of **learning among each group**
Principle of **maintaining the appropriate group scale**
Principle of **steady development**

Why CSA?

We would like to get away from the commoditisation of the food we produce, where a commodity is stripped of its story in order to become a number and a label and take a market value. Labels, certifications and assurances, as much as they might provide an approximation of provenance, also create a barrier, something to hide behind. In that system producers are neither compelled or obliged to be public facing, while consumers are prevented from probing more deeply into the origins of their food, the people who produced it or the landscape it was drawn from. By contrast, we would like to invite you into and become part of our story--our challenges, learnings, achievements, striving to express our values in our farming and sharing what comes of it.

For us, setting up this CSA is a way to decommodify, to find supporters who we can speak to directly, and with that strength and support, commit to our story without compromise.

What your CSA membership will enable

- Landscape regeneration by:
 - ◆ helping us to achieve viability at a small scale by reducing our stocking rate
 - ◆ liberating us from vulnerability to market fluctuations and seasonal variation
- Us to sidestep extractive commodity supply chains and gain control of our produce from paddock to plate (no stock agents, traumatic saleyards, industrial feedlots, wholesale meat packing)
- Financial stability and forecasting, making room for long term planning
- Us to converse directly with the people eating our produce, sharing our experience and sharing yours, creating a feedback cycle lost in commoditised modes of food production
- Fostering a community that cares as much as we do

What Zintara will do for you

- Zintara beef delivered to your locale on a monthly basis along with recipe cards
- Monthly email updates with goings-on around the farm
- Facilitate member-Zintara-member recipe exploration via WhatsApp:
<https://chat.whatsapp.com/FgaC8WNCS9G58b0NB1I5WA>
- Access to Zintara
 - ◆ Farm visits and tours by appointment
 - ◆ Camping access (must be booked ahead and depending on availability)
 - ◆ Annual working bee and lunch
- Transparency
 - ◆ Environmental impact and changes
 - ◆ Future carbon auditing
 - ◆ Livestock handling practices
 - ◆ Ask us anything! Better yet, come see for yourself. The CSA should connect eaters more closely to the farm and knowledge of food production.

What members can do for each other

We think that if some 50 families receiving beef each month share their biggest discoveries, wins and cooking own-goals, then this a pretty good way to build some knowledge and confidence around handling and cooking beef, a skill that increasingly intimidates people as red meat falls more out of fashion or budget. As such we will facilitate the sharing of recipes and pictures of Zintara cooking via an (opt-in) Whatsapp group:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/FgaC8WNCS9G58b0NB1I5WA>

CSA options

Quantity & Price

3kg/month	5kg/month	8kg/month
\$99	\$165	\$264
Biannual	Biannual	Biannual
\$550	\$900	\$1500
Annual	Annual	Annual
\$1050	\$1725	\$2900

Locations

Pick-up locations will be hosted by fellow CSA members and pickup windows will be dictated by their availability, to be communicated on a monthly basis. Please be mindful to collect your meat within their set window.

- **Trawool**
- **Melbourne**
 - ◆ **Brunswick**
 - ◆ **Seddon**
 - ◆ **Coburg Farmers Market**
- **Surf Coast**
- **Geelong**
- Alternatively, meat can always be collected by appointment from Zintara directly via appointment
- Days and times may wriggle around in December/January depending on the availability of the butcher and pick-up location hosts

The Fineprint

Sizing up or down

If you need to size up or down in monthly membership that's no problem at all. Just send us an email a week or so before delivery.

After the first 6 months

All initial memberships will be for 6 months. After 6 months your CSA membership will renew for another 6 months, and we will give you notice of this. Please let us know in month 5 (February or August) if you know you would like to discontinue your membership.

Suspensions

Suspensions (for holidays etc) are not so in keeping with the CSA philosophy so we ask that you try to find someone to take your allocation for that month in the first instance. If that's not possible we can suspend your membership for one month. If you've paid in advance we will add a month on to the end of your 6 months.

Financial hardship & early cancellation

Should you need to cancel your subscription before your first 6 months are complete due to personal circumstances, you will be charged one month of your membership. Chat to us about this if you are experiencing financial hardship.

Payment options

The following payment options are available:

- Monthly bank transfer. Please make payment at least a day prior to delivery
- Payment in advance for 6 months. The following discounts apply for those who pay in advance: 3kg \$550, 5kg \$900 or 8kg \$1500

Price increases

Depending on what's happening with our operation costs and inflation, it may be necessary in the future to increase our per kilo price. We don't expect this to be a common occurrence, nor will it be scheduled into our practice. In keeping with the Teikei principle of **mutual concession in the price decision** any future price increase will be communicated clearly, transparently and well in advance of membership rollover, to allow time for feedback and membership withdrawal if necessary.

What's in the bag?

When you visit the market you'll see organic eye fillets and rib eyes for over \$100/kg. These are referred to as prime cuts, in high demand and short supply. But a beef carcass consists of around 25% prime cuts and 75% slow cook cuts (brisket, chuck, mince, etc).

Your beef costs \$33 per kilo regardless of cut, which is roughly the cost per kilo of organic beef mince. For us, each gram of meat on the animal takes the same amount of effort and costs the same to produce. We think it is all precious.

Applying flat pricing across all cuts and charging a lower per kilo price allows us to simplify our packing process. In exchange, you forgo choice of cuts. We hope this offers an opportunity to learn and explore what you can achieve from different and sometimes unfamiliar cuts — but we believe ethical consumption of meat requires us to utilise the whole animal, not just the popular bits.

Each month your bag will reflect the whole in terms of the animal and include both prime and economy cuts. Expect to see things that are abundant on the animal: chuck, mince, gravy beef, with monthly rotation of the unique cuts: brisket, steaks, osso buco etc. In general, secondary

cuts will require a low slow cook, but beef nerds and chefs will assert they are more flavoursome. See [‘Cooking your Meat’](#) for more info. Bags will not include offal.

Regardless of which cuts you receive, all will be **dry aged for 20 days** which helps to develop flavour and tenderness.

Requests and Variety

- Each month we will keep a record of what you receive in your bag and facilitate something different for next time, with the exception of mince which is always abundant
- We will ask for information about your household and endeavour to tailor something appropriate each month (ie 1kg portions that can feed a family of 5)
- We are happy to try to facilitate one preference per month for all members, we will accommodate where possible with the exception of ‘No mince’. Examples of things we could accommodate are ‘I need extra mince for Bog this month!’, or ‘brisket this month please’ or ‘I’ve heard all the hype and I’d love to try a rib eye this month’
- Sausages anyone? Our butcher offers this option. Please let us know if you’d like saussies. Alternatively, this could be a standing preference we could easily accommodate
- Bones are available by request. Drop us a line before delivery if you’d like bones this month.

How long can it store?

Your beef will come cryovac'd. Please check the label as different cuts will have different used-by dates. If you haven't used it by this time you can freeze it.

When cryovac'ing fails

Cryovac'ing significantly extends the fridge life of meat by creating an anaerobic environment. However, sometimes cryovac'ing doesn't work, such as when it gets snagged on a bone and gets a small tear in the bag. In this instance the use-by-date on the packaging **does not apply**. Please inspect each package when you receive it and if any packages are not tightly sealed use these first or freeze them within a few days. Also, do let us know so we can decide if we need to make changes to our packaging.

Frozen meat

From time to time it may be necessary to supply you with some frozen meat as part of your bag. Looking into a crystal ball, reasons for this might be making up a short-fall if we end up with less meat than expected one month; or if you request something we happen to have frozen; or if we plan a holiday and need to do our butchering in advance. We will give you a big heads up if this ever happens so you can be sure to collect your bag in a timely manner.

Contrary to common belief, **you can re-freeze thawed meat so long as the meat has not come above 5C** (normal fridges are between 0-5C). [You can read more from the USDA on the safety of this practice](#). We advise freezing meat with about 5 days left on its best before to leave you space after you defrost it.

Once previously frozen meat has been cooked, it can be refrozen.

Cooking your meat

We take the cooking of meat as seriously as the raising of it and we hope it brings you much joy over the months (and years?) to come! Here we have included some tips to help you along your way and we hope you will share your triumphs (and failures) with us so that we can build our knowledge base together, like a delicious beefy hive mind.

Cardinal Rules (there are only three)

The number one top secret to cooking great meat is.....not actually a secret:

1. ALWAYS START WITH DRY MEAT AT ROOM TEMPERATURE!

There is no way around this because cooking with chilled meat causes the muscle fibres to contract when they come into contact with heat, leading to chewy, dry and unevenly cooked meat. Depending on the size of the cut, remove it from the fridge at least 1-3 hours before cooking, patting dry before cooking.

2. REST STEAKS, ROASTS AND SLOW COOKS BEFORE CARVING/SERVING

This keeps in the juice and gives the fibres time to relax after cooking. Wrap in tinfoil for 5-10 minutes depending on cut size.

3. BROWN THE SH#T OUT OF IT

If the recipe calls for searing or browning do not be timid. Any meat that you want to be delicious should be bravely, boldly, nearly recklessly seared, going for broke and riding a fine line between browned and burnt. Make sure to heat the pan fully before adding fats and meat. If it doesn't sizzle immediately, quickly remove it cos the pan ain't hot enough. Don't worry about initial sticking. The meat will let go of the pan when it's getting towards brown enough.

4. TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL WITH BRINING

I know we said three but this one is more of an offering than a rule and only if you're able to plan ahead. This involves making a brine of sea salt, water and aromatics (herbs, peppercorns etc) and soaking the cut for 12 or more hours. This imparts salt into the meat and helps seal in juice when cooking (works great for chook too). Just remember to pat dry and bring to room temperature before cooking. Alternatively you can dry brine, which involves rubbing lots of salt, spices etc., onto a cut and popping it on a rack in the fridge for a few hours, or a day, with room for air circulation.

Cut Guide

With a few exceptions, if a cut of meat comes from a part of the cow that has moved a lot (walking, standing, grazing), it will be tougher. These cuts are especially flavoursome because they contain plenty of collagen, which breaks down into gelatin during cooking. Tougher beef cuts are best cooked slowly with liquid added to help break down the tougher muscle fibres. Cuts like this will initially become tougher before they start to tenderise so stay strong! The lower and slower you can cook them (4 hours, 8 hours, 12 hours, 24 hours!?!) the better the results.

However, cooking at medium for too long will suck flavour out of the meat. Low AND slow in balance is key. We don't cook mince too long for the same reason.

Beef cuts from a part of the cow near the top centre that have done less work (think steaks, eye fillet) are more tender. These benefit from quick, hot cooking to lock in juice and derive flavour from direct heat.

Chuck

Making up a large share of the total usable meat, chuck comes from the neck end of the beast. Consisting of hard working muscles, chuck is full of connective tissue, a fair amount of fat, and collagen and is especially rich in flavour. A favourite in our household for its abundance and versatility. Great for:

- Beef Rendang
- Ragu
- Peposo
- Pot roast
- Daube

Gravy Beef

Gravy beef is just an unflattering name for any bit of meat from which the 'silverskin' can't be easily removed. Silverskin is the fascia between muscles and is mostly collagen that melts away into gelatin when slow cooked. It usually comes in smallish pieces so won't need as slow cooking as other cuts listed here but you can if you want, just keep it low and do whatever you want to it!

- Curries
- Stews
- Don't use for stir fries due to the silverskin, which won't have time to break down

Blade Roast

The blade roast is from the shoulder blade area. It's made up of several muscles containing layers of fat and connective tissue. It's best slow cooked:

- Classic roast beef
- Beef bourguignon
- Oyster blade is its own tender thang, see ['The Steaks'](#)

Short Ribs

Full of fat and gelatin, short ribs are a total comfort food no matter which way you cook them.

They are great in soups due to the marrow component, requiring few additional flavours. Low and slow again

- Korean postpartum beef rib and seaweed soup
- Sticky American style business with BBQ sauce

Brisket

Located on the breast of the beast, brisket is one of the most used muscles; it is lean and tough, with coarse muscle fibres. Brisket is also packed with flavour and has a decent amount of external fat which melts and bastes the meat as it cooks. Brisket is a popular cut for marinating, long-and-slow cooking and smoking

- Great on beef pho
- Pulled beef
- Slow cooked and served on noodle salads

Osso Buco/Shanks

Cross-cut from the cow's front and back legs, shanks are tough and sinewy with relatively little marbling. Though they aren't the most tender cuts, they are great for making extra healthful broth when boiled or braised thanks to all that bone marrow and collagen. Slow cook these in:

- Osso buco (obviously)
- Ragu
- Old fashioned beef and vegetable soups

Skirt

Is a long, thin portion of the diaphragm, so frequent use means it's got a deep flavour but is more tender than other working muscles – not too different to the hanger (onglet) steak. See ['The Steaks'](#) for cooking tips. Goes great with:

- Salsa verde
- In a salad
- Chimichurri

Flank

Along the abdomen of the cow lies the long, flat flank. This cut has long, fairly coarse muscle fibres that are tough but very flavorful. Flank cuts taste richly beefy and the long, ropey loose muscle fibres absorb marinades well. The long fibres make the flank chewy, but cutting across the grain makes the cuts easier to eat. Because there isn't much marbling, it's best to quickly grill flank to medium rare and slice it thinly across the grain on a diagonal.

- Brining flank is a boss move, before quick hot searing
- Fajitas, marinated and sliced first or cooked whole and sliced across the grain afterwards
- Use in a steak salad

Silverside

A chunky cut from the upper hind quarter, round the back of the leg. It's a tougher cut with not much marble but a nice wide grain and is in the low and slow category. This is the cut traditionally used for corned beef, a most polarising dish that is definitely making a comeback.

- Pot roast
- Corned beef (with hot english mustard and buttery boiled potatoes 😊)
- Homemade pastrami from corned beef
- Bresaola (see below)

Topside

Coming from the hind quarter, above the silverside but a little less tough, topside is very versatile

- Homemade Bresaola! This is our go to, served with roquette, lemon juice and grated horseradish, makes us look pretty fancy but its really easy and just takes time and some sacrificial bottles of wine
- Cut into minute steaks
- Steak sangas!
- Slow Roast Beef
- Wet braise

The 'Steaks'

Finally, we come to the most popular girls in school. Feared and revered, this family of cuts hailing from several parts of the beast can be grouped together by the simplicity of their preparation. To reiterate, here's the path of least resistance for these bad girls:

1. Bash for tenderising, unless a very tender cut (eye fillet, tenderloin) or has a big bone
2. Salt salt salt! Whether via brining (wet/dry) or just prior to cooking
3. Bring to room temp, pat dry
4. Cook it till it's crusty, finish in oven for a bigger cut
5. Check for doneness with a meat thermometer at 60° or by poking it (this skill can be acquired over time)
6. R.I.T (Rest in tinfoil)
7. Slice across the grain before serving
8. Make the most of pan juices by cooling the pan and chucking in some butter and sage/rosemary to make a sauce

These include:

- Rib eye — approx 12 per animal
- Eye fillet — usually less than 2kg per animal so a rare sight in your bag. Also great for carpaccio, tartare or filet mignon
- Scotch fillet — just a rib eye sans bone
- Tri-tip — only two per beast, lucky you!
- Bavette
- Sirloin
- Tenderloin — try steak tartare!
- T-bone
- Porterhouse
- Flat iron
- Oyster blade
- Skirt
- Rump — cut across the grain, also good in stir frys

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