

**Executive Office**

206 Riffel Rd.

Wooster, OH

44691-8588

Phone: 330-345-2333

Fax: 330-345-0808



**Manhattan Office**

1107 Hylton Heights Rd.

Manhattan, KS

66502-2821

Phone: 785-539-0123

Fax: 330-345-0802

www.

certifiedangusbeef

.com

CONTACT: Miranda Reiman, Industry Information Assistant Director, [MReiman@certifiedangusbeef.com](mailto:MReiman@certifiedangusbeef.com)  
Certified Angus Beef LLC (308) 784-2294

Photos: <http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/VanOverbeke3.jpg>  
<http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/John-Lundeen.jpg>

## We still want beef

By Miranda Reiman

People love beef.

When price skyrockets, and incomes are tight, people still love beef. That's according to a new Oklahoma State University research report, "Retail and Foodservice Marketing Trends for Beef."

Co-authors Bailey Harsh and Deb VanOverbeke combined data from major consumer databases to find, "even as late as 2013, among consumers who changed their meat purchases 91% were spending less."

Most indications show that's returning to pre-recession levels.

"The majority of consumers today say beef isn't too expensive. But most importantly, 72% of consumers listed beef as their first or top choice of proteins in 2013," it states.

"Even during a recession, folks still want to have beautiful moments in their lives," says John Lundeen, senior executive director of market research for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to the Beef Checkoff.

Still, as drought and other herd-shrinking circumstances helped elevate prices and add to the cash register crunch, many predicted a decline in demand.

"If you look at the trends, beef consumption didn't really fall during that time," says VanOverbeke. "They maybe changed how they used it, maybe using more casserole-type dishes using beef, rather than having steak—but people didn't change beef consumption as a whole."

Trading middle meats for grinds gave home cooks a chance to stretch their food dollars, Lundeen says.

"Ground beef is very familiar and you can do a lot of things with it," he says. "I can buy a pound of ground beef and feed my family, so there is a value story there."

It's easy to prepare—a trait most beef eaters are looking for today.

Beef consumption is higher among the "Millennial" generation, those born from 1980 to 2000, than those over 35.

"Millennials are a major target for beef marketing because they consume the most beef both at home and in restaurants of any generation and, given their age, will continue to be a major driver of beef demand," the research says.

A decline in high-school cooking education coupled with more after-school activities taking families out of the kitchen, could lead to a decrease in preparing beef for dinner, Lundeen says.

"It's not happening at school and it's happening to a smaller degree in the home, so you just don't grow up with it," he says, "but that does not mean that there isn't a desire to cook."

Indeed, this generation has grown up with the Food Network and a greater exposure to a vast array of food choices.

“Cooking is a very social thing and is a common force among people,” Lundeen says, noting that the beef industry must equip consumers to work with the product.

In some cases, it’s increasing easy-to-prepare options. The paper says in the past four years the number of consumers preparing “convenience meats” has increased 12%.

“We can’t assume that folks know how to buy the cut, how to season it, how to prep it and how to know when it’s done or what temperature to cook it at,” Lundeen says, “but the desire for knowledge is there and people want great food. That’s what beef has to deliver on.”

The higher quality the beef, the more likely it is to live up to expectations, says Phil Bass, *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) brand meat scientist.

“High quality meat results in the high quality end product,” he says, noting marbling increases the three palatability components: tenderness, juiciness and flavor. “Marbling is less dense than protein, so if you have the marbling in that piece of meat it’s going to be easier to bite through.”

Research also shows the more intramuscular fat, the more intense the “beautiful, buttery-flavor” and the juicier the meat is.

Higher quality beef is also more forgiving. Beef Checkoff studies show nearly 50% of people like their steaks cooked “medium well” to “well done.”

“As a result, if you don’t have that marbling in there then it’s going to turn out to be a very dry steak,” Bass says. “The marbling doesn’t evaporate, but the water does cook off.”

Branding at the meat case helps assure purchasers they’re getting what they want.

“In all categories, consumers have preferred brands. When you talk about ketchup, most people are brand loyal,” VanOverbeke shares as an example. “We’re seeing beef move toward that brand recognition.”

Since 2002, CAB demand increased 108%, compared to a 51% increase for USDA Choice or higher, and a decline of 1% for unbranded Choice, according to a Kansas State University demand index in 2014.

“Part of the goal is to get consumers to come back to that section of the meat case over and over again because they are happy with the beef they had the last time,” she says

VanOverbeke says the main research message is that beef came through the recession in good shape and poised for growth.

“Consumers ultimately believe the price reflects beef’s value and continue to vote with their dollars for beef’s flavor, juiciness, tenderness and versatility,” the authors say.

People love beef.

Now it’s up to the industry to make sure they continue to have reasons to, Lundeen cautions: “We have to produce a great product that, at the end of the day, tastes good. Actually it has to taste more than good. It has to taste great.”

To read more, view the entire white paper at [www.cabpartners.com/news/research.php](http://www.cabpartners.com/news/research.php).

END