



CAB Corner on Quality (graphic file logo for heading available on request)

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New Horizons in Casual Dining

By Mark Polzer, Director, CAB Foodservice Division

When Angus producers think about their Certified Angus Beef® brand, perhaps a candlelit, white tablecloth dinner for a special occasion comes to mind. Your brand is all that, and more—but also less, in the sense that you don't have to wear a tie or evening gown for the CAB dining experience.

From across the street to across the country, supermarket to favorite restaurant, increasingly, you'll find the CAB brand. That's because the consistent flavor combined with a wide variety from fresh cuts to value-added, hamburgers and deli, generates increasing consumer demand. And consumer dollars represent the only new money in the cattle business.

CAB established its foodservice reputation in the early 1980s, with upscale chefs in New York, Chicago and other major cities. Now that Angus producers have responded to the growing demand with greater supply, the CAB brand is enjoyed around the world, from country clubs to sandwich shops.

In fact, the casual dining sector is driving beef sales today, rapidly expanding across the western United States, and it's not just CAB steak sales (up 6% this year). Burgers are up 13.7% (remember when nobody thought people would care if their burger was CAB?). Prime rib, roast beef, steak sandwiches—sales are up more than 40% across the board.

There is a widespread resurgence of the quest for a "comfort food experience" at the restaurant level, and the nation has rejoined it wholeheartedly as time begins to separate us from the terrorist attacks of September 2001.

During the period after that dark day, when more consumers stayed home, the foodservice sector was very open to the concept of utilizing the underutilized and therefore undervalued cuts. The teres major, also referred to as the Bistro Tender or Shoulder Tender, is the third most tender muscle, behind

the tenderloin and flat iron, another cut now seeing more use as packers respond to the growing foodservice demand. These cut options are becoming great substitutes and new menu items for all restaurants.

Building on that greater use of the carcass is the brand's growing line of value-added products, several of which have won top industry awards. The heat-and-serve and deli entrees provide cost-saving menu solutions for chefs and home-style, quick meals for consumers. The most popular value-added CAB product moving through restaurants is roast beef, with sales of briskets and meatloaf also up more than 40%.

CAB keeps working with licensed partners on recipe development and ideas that create a higher value for the entire animal. That keeps prices of these items lower and creates more options for the smaller diner, which can still maintain integrity with the CAB brand. These products also work for the foodservice operators who struggle with availability and labor costs.

With greater carcass utilization has come the ability of CAB licensed distributors to serve more casual and fast food restaurants, health care and in-plant foodservice settings and colleges. CAB gives these establishments an opportunity to improve image with customers and provide "exciting dining experiences" instead of just more meals.

Greater carcass utilization has historically driven producer premiums. When licensed CAB packers find they can sell more of each accepted carcass as higher-value branded product, two good things happen. 1.) The most valuable steak cuts don't have to carry as much of the value so they remain more affordable. 2) Packers see the need to procure more cattle that meet brand specifications, typically offering higher premiums for the finished cattle.

By selling broader markets for foodservice, CAB captures more value for the entire animal and further satisfies consumer demands. Your brand is committed to providing consumers with consistent products and options to meet any budget—without sacrificing quality. In the Angus business today, through the genetic database and the network of more than 80 licensed feedlots, you have the opportunity to supply this quality "*Angus beef at its best*"™ at historical premiums, without sacrificing production.

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