



*CAB Corner on Quality*  
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*Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>)

## **Chefs schooled in beef basics**

*By Jennifer Kiko, CAB Communications and Media Manager*

In the quest for high-quality beef, cattle producers have learned a thing or two about their end product. “Carcass merit” is still the key, but it helps to understand the consumer preferences on which that merit is based.

Knowing what consumers expect in a restaurant, meat case and on the family dinner table is imperative to promoting a product that delivers what they want. Producers have reshaped the cattle industry as demand driven and consumer focused, and that commitment to understanding is starting to take form within the food industry.

Thanks to the *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> (CAB<sup>®</sup>) culinary team – two chefs, a meat cutter and a home economist – elite chefs across the country are signing up to be “put out to pasture” in the name of the brand.

### **Down on the farm and ranch**

Last spring, New York food writers and media boarded a bus in the heart of the Big Apple, bound for Trowbridge Angus Farm in nearby Ghent, N.Y. They spent the day getting to know live cattle. They met the folks who raise and market them. They dined on CAB steaks and heard from company representatives.

In September, Cleveland chefs will pull on boots and jeans for CAB Farm Day at Summitcrest Angus in Summitville, Ohio. These culinary experts will meet producers, see live cattle and learn everything from supply dynamics and merchandising opportunities to on-farm decisions that affect final product.

In October, Chicago-area chefs will spend a day in the life of an Angus ranch. They will tour a state-of-the-art packing plant and learn how carcasses are identified with the CAB brand. They will lunch on CAB strip steaks and meet Jay King, general manager of Sauk Valley Angus and president of

the American Angus Association. Discussion topics will include cattle identification, health and nutrition, and everything about live cattle that governs how beef will taste.

“We’ve discovered there is great enthusiasm for ranch tours among the country’s chefs,” says Mary McMillen, who heads CAB’s culinary team. “They may know what high-quality beef tastes and looks like, but most haven’t had an opportunity to learn how it came to be.”

That’s where the CAB team can help. With a complete understanding of production, the food industry will be better equipped to meet the needs of beef customers.

### **Facing facts**

“We assume too much when it comes to beef knowledge,” McMillen says. As former director of consumer affairs for Buehler’s Fresh Foods in Wooster, Ohio, McMillen knows what consumers want – and what the industry must do to satisfy demand. Success begins with education – not only for consumers, but for restaurateurs and retailers, too.

“Our job is to bring the information down to a basic level. A meat cutter may never taste the flank steak he offers customers. A chef may not conduct a taste test between the CAB brand and another. They need to know how it became the best,” McMillen says. “They have to taste the difference for themselves before they can successfully promote the CAB brand to their customers. The ultimate test of great beef is if they say ‘Wow!’ at first bite.”

Besides consumer events and promotions, the team has taken on a role in the nation’s culinary schools. CAB hosts special training at a school in Cincinnati and even sponsors a contest at a Virginia institute. Chefs in training compete against each other using CAB product. After an educational session, they communicate the brand message in their final presentations. It’s grassroots education that makes a big impact.

“One of our biggest challenges is to educate these chefs on the basic fact that people still eat for flavor, first. Fad diets, new techniques, ethnic cuisines and gourmet restaurants aside, everything really boils down to flavor,” McMillen says. “And nothing satisfies like real beef.”

### **In the works**

CAB’s culinary team has many irons in the cooking fire. They will form an in-company “recipe test” team for quality control, build a more user-friendly Web site ([certifiedangusbeef.com](http://certifiedangusbeef.com)) with recipes ranked by level of difficulty, and keep educating themselves and the brand’s partners.

“Our main goal is to forward CAB’s mission,” McMillen says, “and we choose to do it one mouthful at a time.”

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