



CAB Corner on Quality
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For the love of great steaks

By Deanna Walenciak, CAB Director of Trade Marketing

You are passionate about what you do. Ranching, farming and raising cattle are your life. From the long days and the not-so-glamorous jobs to the excitement in each newborn calf, most ranchers can't imagine another way of life.

Further down the supply chain, on the way to the consumer, there's a network made up of great chefs who rival your passion. Like you, they know an 18-hour day can be the norm. And, just as the cows need to eat on holidays, so do steak-loving consumers.

Chefs don't really know a day off. They, too, face challenges in finding skilled, reliable labor. Yet, many of them can't imagine doing anything else. They tackle the dirty jobs, right down to oven and pot cleaning, and live for the great moments—not just serving their customers a meal but absolutely “wowing” them.

These chefs practically knock diners off their feet with great steaks. Simply put, they make cattlemen look good. An independent steakhouse can serve literally a ton of steaks in a month, and the top tier can serve 10 tons in that time. Steakhouses sell the high-value middle meats—filet mignons, strip steaks, porterhouses and ribeyes—but also use creativity to market lesser known cuts like the teres major and skirt steaks. Keeping demand strong on the middle meats is an important part of driving value for the entire carcass.

Maybe it's the popularity of the Food Network and Bravo's hit show “Top Chef” that is fueling consumers' fascination with chefs. Or, maybe it's Americans' love affair with beef and our admiration for those who can serve it best. Whatever it is, it's good for our industry. Top steakhouses garner \$49 or more for a single meal. It's the great steak, the ambiance of the restaurant, the service and, in many cases, it's about the chef.

At Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) we have the distinct pleasure of working with many of our country's best. We share marketing ideas, photography and staff training. We help host customer events, develop creative advertising materials and showcase new cuts.

It's exciting to see how the chefs value top-quality ingredients. From fresh produce to the finest wines and, of course, the best beef, their standards are high. After all, their restaurants' and personal reputations rely on it.

Red, the Steakhouse has been serving the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand in Cleveland since 1996. When Executive Chef Peter Vauthy opened a new location in Miami in 2008, reviews said his culinary vision and innovation "turned South Florida's steak business on its side."

Still, the chef says a lot of people don't "get" steakhouses. "When they come in they think they understand a steakhouse: house salad and a filet. But, as soon as they get in the door, I have to say 'try this, try that.' I go over to the table and hand-sell things. I'll say look, if you don't like this, I'll buy it for you. Then they taste it and say they've never tasted beef this good."

He often replies to those compliments, "I would love to take credit, but all I did was call up my distributor" and order the filets. "When they come in, I know I still have to treat them with love and care, and season and cook correctly and all those things. But the product itself is beyond consistent," says Vauthy. He wishes ranchers could see their product at its peak –where the quality, taste and flavor earn another loyal beef customer for life.

Training waitstaff is another important part of what CAB offers chefs. "My staff gets excited about the product itself," he says of the training. "They eat it up because they can go to the table and it's such an easy sell for them. They understand how exclusive it is."

And Vauthy's customers are taking notice. As one online example put it, "*My ribeye was perfectly pink on the inside and juicy. The quality of the beef could not be argued, as the taste was sinful.*"

With reviews like that, I say keep it coming. Keep bringing great beef to the market. Chefs and consumers are clamoring for it. And, next time you go to a great steakhouse (check www.certifiedangusbeef.com on where to buy), take a minute to introduce yourself to the chefs. Thank them for making cattlemen look good. You might just be surprised how much you have in common.

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