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PHOTOS: <http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/Sally-Drake-Zito.jpg> (Sally & her brother Drake with J&W Chef Russ Zito in the University's kitchen)  
<http://www.cabpartners.com/news/photos/Yons-Presenting.jpg>

## Angus producers share with culinary students

*Yon siblings discuss beef production and CAB*

by Jill Seiler

Imagine being a college student so focused on preparing great meals that you choose to attend one of the most prestigious chef schools in the land. You find that it takes much more than following recipes or even creating your own – you have to know where food comes from.

Beef has a story to tell, and perhaps none could make a connection to culinary students better than recent agriculture college graduates and siblings Drake and Sally, who came home to their roots at Yon Family Farms, Ridge Spring, S.C.

The two shared how beef is raised on their farm with more than 200 future chefs at Johnson & Wales University's Providence, R.I., campus in February. That came about as part of the longtime relationships the university and the Yon family have with the *Certified Angus Beef*<sup>®</sup> brand.

Sally Yon Harrison and brothers Drake and Corbin graduated from Clemson University, where parents Kevin and Lydia Yon first met, before joining the family business started in 1996 with 100 Angus cows. Today, the farm has more than 1,000 cows, and Kevin serves as president of the American Angus Association.

Taking turns addressing the students, the Yons showed slides to help tell their story, crediting the Angus breed for its quality and ability to produce cattle that earn market premiums. The young ranchers noted the importance of consistency.

Customers know they can rely on Yon bulls because of long experience with them and also because of their expected progeny difference (EPD) numbers, Drake explained.



“So we know this bull is going to produce more calves that are Prime and Choice rather than Select,” he said, indicating a slide. “It’s the consistency they want. Then, from the packer on, consistency is super important, of course—a huge deal when it comes to food, right?”

“That’s what you get with CAB, which created this brand with all the guidelines cattle have to meet to qualify,” Drake noted. “That’s why our cows are worth more than other cows. CAB has created that experience. Everybody wants that certified Angus steak, so everybody wants to buy the Angus bulls that will produce more of the best, and they come to us.”

Sally said, “Angus is the only breed that could allow my family to be successful first-generation seedstock producers. The beginning of the supply chain starts with Angus producers, but our success is determined by consumers’ positive eating experiences. Chefs play a huge role in this. It’s a win-win situation for all parties because of the consistency and quality of CAB products.”

The audience was very receptive, “keen on learning” from the beef producers, Drake said later. “We know these college students will have a huge influence on the food industry in the future, and we wanted to do our best to give a positive perspective of the beef community.”

The Yons answered questions about typical as well as controversial ranch topics, excited to have a meaningful dialogue from their generational peers on the product side.

“I’ve never seen students as engaged as they were with Sally and Drake,” said Mary McMillen, CAB Strategic Partnerships. “They were sponges.”

“When we got in the classroom and began telling our family’s story, the students were engaged from start to finish, listening intently and more importantly, asking lots of good questions,” Drake said.

All enjoyed a sampling of CAB strip steaks from fellow presenter DeBragga, “New York’s Butcher,” during the event.

“That opened the door to explaining that these CAB steaks were likely not from their farm, but how the consistency of CAB has helped to elevate the quality of their herd, and the impact on ranchers and farmers in all states,” McMillen said.

Sally and Drake encouraged students to “like” Yon Family Farms on Facebook and, with the instructors’ blessing to take out their phones, got an immediate surge. They were all invited to stop by if they’re ever near Ridge Spring.

Johnson & Wales College of Culinary Arts is a globally recognized program offering standard, accelerated and weekend associate and bachelor’s degrees. With more than 8,000 students across four campuses, the strategic CAB partner is one of the top culinary programs in the nation.

“CAB serves as a link to connect these worlds,” McMillen said. “We help the many thousands of Angus producers who own our brand better understand chefs. At the same time, the brand has become a go-to resource for succeeding classes of chefs, providing welcome and factual beef information because we choose to educate rather than simply advocate for CAB.”

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