

Bikers for Beef

As the official meat of the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, beef has a starring role.

by Kindra Gordon, field editor

Motorcycles are of course the main event during South Dakota's annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, hosted the first week of August in the scenic Black Hills. But with nearly half a million motorcycle enthusiasts showing up throughout the 10-day event, offering an array of food for hungry bikers is also a top priority.

Recognizing this unique opportunity to put the spotlight on beef, the South Dakota Beef Industry Council has directed beef checkoff funds toward sponsorship opportunities at the motorcycle rally for the last three years, with beef featured as the "official meat"

of the event. This annual presence includes promotional beef banners throughout Sturgis, a beef-themed billboard along the interstate and various events that make beef the center of attention amid attendees — and on social media.

The 2019 Sturgis Motorcycle Rally included a "beef throw down" competition among Black Hills area restaurants, as well as a special event hosted at Mount Rushmore Angus Ranch on Aug. 8, which allowed local beef producers to connect with celebrity chef Justin Warner, who is known for regular appearances on Food Network.

Cattlemen's Beef Board CEO Greg Hanes also attended the ranch meet-and-greet and visited with producers.

Cooking at 700° F

"The ranch event provided an opportunity to highlight one of our South Dakota Angus ranches," says American Angus Association Regional Manager Rod Geppert who attended along with nearly 80 producers. "It was a great way to open conversation with a renowned chef as he toured the ranch and was allowed to ask questions about the production process. This was



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expanded further as producers gathered together to talk about the beef industry for the evening."

Rod notes that the Angus breed in this region plays an important role for beef producers and consumers alike. He credits the breed for providing maternal traits and performance that thrive in western South Dakota and delivering a carcass that grades extremely well on the grid.

During the chef demonstration, Warner wowed producers by searing a beef tenderloin at 700° F, then dropped it into liquid nitrogen to quickly freeze it, and finally sliced it thinly to serve as beef carpaccio. *Certified Angus Beef®* (CAB®), which sold 1.215 billion pounds (lb.) of CAB in 2018, supplied the beef for this producer event.

David Uhrig, manager at Mount Rushmore Angus Ranch, helped coordinate and host the event and appreciated the perspective Warner offered to producers with



American Angus Association Regional Manager Rod Geppert, Mount Rushmore Angus Ranch manager David Uhrig, Chef Justin Warner and Cattlemen's Beef Board CEO Greg Hanes were co-hosts to nearly 80 producers who attended a meet-and-greet evening at Mount Rushmore Angus during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. The event included a chef demonstration and roundtable discussion on industry issues.

regard to alternative and lab-grown proteins. "He's a millennial; and he acknowledged millennials are a different generation that likes to try what's new. But he told producers not to get too worked up [about alternative products]," Uhrig notes.

Warner went on to assure beef producers that real beef is still very much sought and celebrated by consumers and "sells itself."

That said, Warner encouraged producers to continue sharing their ranch heritage with consumers and include that story in beef marketing efforts. As one example, Uhrig shared that Warner suggested beef tips might instead be featured on menus as "Dakota Nuggets."

Gary Deering, a commercial cattleman who currently serves as president of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association and is a member of the South Dakota Beef Industry Council, also felt Warner's comments were a good reminder to producers to continue striving to connect with consumers.

"People want to know where their food comes from and have questions," he says. "Producers need to continue to talk about beef."

Deering appreciated Hanes being in South Dakota as well. "We have a

dynamic among producers with some who are supportive of the checkoff and some who are not. Greg listened to all of them and showed an interest in what's on producers' minds," Deering says.

In summation, Suzy Geppert deemed the week of promotion during the rally a huge success for the spotlight it put on beef. Suzy is the executive director of the South Dakota Beef Industry Council.

"The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally provides a great venue to expose travelers to cattle country and share our beef story," she says. "The beef competition is also a nice partnership to showcase restaurants within communities. And this year's ranch event allowed our producers to be engaged in learning more about their beef checkoff and have a voice. Together all of these efforts are about building demand for beef." **A**

Editor's note: Eleven Black Hills restaurants participated in this year's motorcycle rally "Sturgis Beef Throw Down" competition, which was judged by Chef Warner and local beef producers. Chef Clark Braun from the Alpine Inn in Hill City, S.D., was deemed the winner with his Steak Diane sandwich which featured beef filet tips, sliced thinly and seared on the grill, served on a tender bun and topped with delicately cut mushrooms.

