



THE POWER PROTEIN

Beef has been a staple on dinner tables for many years, but what makes it so special? Learn the health benefits behind the power protein and how to share its story with consumers.

by Megan Silveira

Gathered around a crudely shaped “pie” made solely of dirt and mud shaped by their own little hands during recess, a group of fourth graders bicker about who should be the first to try the delicacy. One pig-tailed girl squeals appropriately as a worm wriggles through the hard mud crust.

“Don’t worry, it’s protein,” says the mud chef.

While these future consumers don’t yet understand the importance of real protein in a diet, they are certainly familiar with the buzz word. The current market is filled with customers, young and old, who know the word “protein” but do not

necessarily understand the significant role it plays in their diet.

Today’s consumers are eager to learn about their food and where it comes from, says Caitlin Mondelli, registered dietitian and associate director of food and health communication at the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to the Beef Checkoff.

While Mondelli knows everyone has their own preferences and opinions when it comes to what’s on their dinner plates, she says beef can play an important role in a healthy diet.

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Dinner bill of health

“You’re getting a lot of bang for your buck when it comes to beef,” Mondelli says. “Good quality evidence from numerous, randomized trials consistently show that consuming 4 to 5 ounces (oz.) of lean beef daily can support good health.”

These trials are what Mondelli refers to as “gold standard research” and have revealed this recommended daily serving of beef contributes to maintaining a healthy immune system, producing energy and supporting a healthy metabolism.

In each sitting, Mondelli encourages consumers to eat about 3 oz. of lean beef, or roughly an amount similar in size to a deck of cards. This serving size of meat offers the consumer more than 10 essential nutrients for about 173 calories.

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Fat and cholesterol content is the only difference between lean and regular beef, but both types contain the same protein and health benefits, Mondelli explains. While more than 60% of whole muscle beef cuts are considered lean, she says all types of cuts can fit into a healthy lifestyle.

Not yet convinced about the power of this protein? Mondelli says B vitamins, iron and zinc are

also provided in a single serving of beef. Combine all these characteristics, and you will find yourself enjoying a delicious meal capable of helping manage weight while improving brain function.

Mondelli describes beef as a complete protein, meaning it provides the nine essential amino acids the human body is incapable of producing on its own. Unlike beef and other animal proteins, plant proteins are unable to provide all the amino acids we need to function.

A certified difference

Melissa Brewer, director of communications for the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) brand, recognizes today’s market as an ideal place for the beef industry to promote itself and its products. She says beef producers have an opportunity to serve as the solution for consumers looking for a source of protein for their families.

“It’s an interesting market place right now,” Brewer says. “You see consumers who are wanting to eat healthier and cooking meals that are healthier and have great taste.”

The power protein can certainly meet those high level of expectations.

Even as diet fads ebb and flow, Brewer says trends only open more doors for producers to have intentional conversations with the public about beef and the community that raises it.

Brewer says today’s consumer is further removed from food production than ever before, and producers are faced with the task of sharing their

beef production story and more simply, how to cook a great piece of beef. While producers themselves are comfortable with the industry and beef products, Brewer says the need to recognize cuts of beef can be intimidating to a consumer.

The process of preparing beef for a meal can also be overwhelming. Especially for some consumers tasked with not only needing to understand which cut to purchase but also how to properly prepare it for safe consumption.

But Angus breeders have an overall advantage on the market, Brewer says. With the ability for their products to reach a high-quality end point and qualify for the CAB label, producers within the Angus breed can provide the great tasting beef consumers crave.

The CAB program itself is dedicated to helping customers gain the confidence they need to select beef as the star of their meals, Brewer says.

“We are continually looking for ways to provide consumers with information on how to be successful in the kitchen,” Brewer explains.

From Facebook Live demonstrations breaking down challenging aspects of cooking beef by CAB culinary staff to the Roast Perfect app available

on smart phones dedicated to pinpointing recipes tailored to individual needs. Brewer says CAB is doing everything in their power to reach out to consumers and spread the word about this protein.



“Those tools, as simple as they sound, are really helpful at giving consumers the ability to be successful with beef,” Brewer says.

She says consumers need to feel at ease with their ability to repeatedly purchase and cook beef, and CAB uses all available outlets to provide them with the tools they need to enjoy the entire experience of cooking a beef-centered meal.

Brewer says beef producers have the unique opportunity of passing on their knowledge of the industry to consumers. She appreciates the dedication they already display.

“Producers are doing a great job raising beef that so many enjoy having on the table,” she says. “Being part of spreading the word makes a big difference.” **AJ**

Editor's note: Megan Silveira is a freelance writer from Denair, Calif.



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