

Certified Angus Beef Answers a Frustrating Search for Quality

Old San Francisco Steak Houses

Four Texas restaurants now serve 100,000 lb. of Certified Angus Beef a month—and plan to double that demand. Get to work Angus breeders, they say.

by Nancy Ann Sayre

“**W**e are a steak house. We emphasize the thing we are noted for and that is the finest beef in the world,” says Paul Sermas, vice president and director of operations for Old San Francisco Steak Houses. His has been an exhausting, aggressive search for quality beef. “If it’s out there, we’re going to buy it. We want priority—the key word is priority—we want first choice.”

Certified Angus Beef (CAB) seems to be the answer to that search. It gives Old San Francisco first choice, an assurance the beef has already met strict quality standards.

“The advantage to the CAB program is that it takes much of the guesswork out of our buying methods,” explains Sermas. “Packers can identify the proper beef and trace it from the hoof to our tables.”

Sermas is not easy to please. But Angus breeders would be hard pressed to find a more committed spokesman for their product: Quality beef. Certified Angus Beef to be specific.

“We are beef people,” says Sermas about the entire Old San Francisco staff. “And as long as our logo reigns supreme, we will never serve anything except the highest quality American beef. We have found our place in this market, we have a commitment

and we won’t veer from that . . . We have established a market where the customer demands the best. We cannot gamble, there is no room for a mistake.”

CAB, he claims, “is by far the best program in acquiring the product we want. It is the answer to our dreams.”

\$300,000 a month . . . and more

Four Old San Francisco restaurants—located in Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Houston—represent the largest beef account in Texas, according to Sermas. The account translates to a monthly beef volume of

\$300,000. And as of January, that total is spent exclusively on CAB.

The Dallas operation alone welcomes 2,200 to 2,400 people a night. The four locations combined serve more than 100,000 lb. of beef a month to as many customers. Such demand requires some 2,500 CAB carcasses each month, which means quite a boost for the American Angus Assn.’s program and, hopefully, for Angus breeders in general.

The future looks even brighter. Old San Francisco anticipates doubling their demand



“We’ve always served the highest quality beef available,” says Paul Sermas (left), Old San Francisco director of operations. “The advantage to the Certified Angus Beef program is that we now have priority.” Mick Colvin, director of the CAB program, presents a letter from the Association commending the restaurants on their decision to feature CAB exclusively.

in the near future—several new restaurants are to be opened in the coming year.

But before the wheels for such plans could begin to turn, Old San Francisco needed a guaranteed source of top quality beef. Welcome CAB.

"It was critical for us to establish this kind of program," explains Sermas, "because quality meat is hard to get. It's easy to open a restaurant, but it's not easy to serve the product you want . . . I cannot emphasize enough the value of quality beef to our organization."

Since their first opening in San Antonio (1968), Old San Francisco has requested USDA Prime beef. But Prime is difficult to locate these days. Tom Renfro, executive officer of Texas HRI, will attest to that. His company, a Dallas-based quality beef distributorship, supplies Old San Francisco. The steak houses represent not only HRI's largest account, but its most discriminating one as well. According to Renfro, CAB is the only answer to such a strict, high volume demand. (HRI became a licensed CAB distributor for the Texas area last fall; Renfro is encouraged by response to the program among elite restaurants and food service operations.)

The program behind the quality

The CAB program was launched in 1978; plans date back to 1975. (Refer to the Oct. 1980 Journal for details.) The American Angus Assn. recognized a need to identify and merchandise quality beef—a product long synonymous with our breed, but one which seemed to be losing its identity with the relaxation of grading standards. In response, the CAB program was designed to provide an abundance of high quality, trim, delicious beef usually unavailable to either supermarkets or the food service industry.

"As an organization we (Angus breeders) can help increase beef consumption by increasing our quality level," says Mick Colvin, director of the Association's unique merchandising program. "We have tried to do this with the CAB program." Colvin has worked closely with CAB since its inception. The path has presented many stumbling blocks in an extremely competitive business, but current production figures now signal success.

Originally, retail distribution was on a whole carcass basis through supermarkets and grocery stores. Less than two years ago the program was expanded to include the food service industry. Since then expansion and progress have been rapid. Recent monthly sales volume figures have reached 510,000 lb., which generates \$1.2 million a month—yearly estimates exceed \$14 million. (Approximately one percent of the total dollar volume is paid to the Association.)

Six packing plants now supply this CAB beef to the industry. (Refer to complete listing of CAB sources; Old San Francisco beef is supplied by National Packing Company, Liberal, Kan.) On a weekly basis, 2,300 to 2,400 head are certified and accepted as CAB. Yet those finally earning the

Who's Serving and Supplying Certified Angus Beef?

SIGNED RESTAURANTS

Colorado

Craig Morton's Restaurant, Denver

Florida

Maas Bros. Sun Coast Restaurant, Tampa
Ted's Back Door Restaurant, Largo
Townsend's Fishhouse Tavern, Orlando

Georgia

Chattahoochee Country Club, Gainesville
Gantt's Steak House, St. Gimon's
Highland Country Club, La Grange
Southern Men's Club, Augusta

Illinois

Chessies Inc., Barington
Sauers Restaurant, Chicago
The Shrimp Walk Restaurant, Highwood
Yesterday's Party Tavern & Grill, Chicago

Indiana

Fort Wayne Marriott, Fort Wayne
Fort Wayne Moonraker, Fort Wayne
Fort Wayne Wharf, Fort Wayne
South Bend Moonraker, South Bend
Sweeny's Speciality Restaurant, Highland

Maryland

Wild Goose Chase Restaurant, Ocean City

Massachusetts

Vin & Eddie's Restaurant, North Abington

Michigan

Grand Rapids Marriott, Grand Rapids

Nebraska

Skyline Woods Country Club, Omaha

North Carolina

Carolina Country Club, Raleigh

Ohio

Cleveland Marriott Inn, Cleveland
Columbus Marriott East, Columbus
Columbus Marriott North, Columbus
Don's Lighthouse, Cleveland
Don's Pomeroy House, Strongsville
The Greenhouse Restaurant, Cleveland Heights
Marriott Inn, Beachwood
Noggin's Restaurant, Shaker Heights
The Pub, Niles

Pennsylvania

Ed Stoudt's Black Angus Steak House, Adamstown
Nick's Chat A While Restaurant, Reading

South Carolina

Loft Restaurant, Columbia
Ramada Inn of Clemson, Clemson

Tennessee

Parson's Table, Jonesborough

Texas

Old San Francisco Steak Houses, Austin, Dallas,
Houston and San Antonio

Foreign

Shangri-La-Hotel, Singapore

RETAIL DISTRIBUTORS

Brooks Provisions, Philadelphia, Pa.
Oxford Trading Co., Boston, Mass.

UNSIGNED RESTAURANTS

These restaurants feature CAB, but have not signed a contract.

New York

The Ritz, New York City
Tavern on the Green, New York City
Harry M. Stevens Catering, (serving all Eastern racetracks and the Houston Astrodome)

Washington, D.C.

Washington Hilton
Congressional Country Club

Foreign

The Mandarin, Hong Kong

FOOD SERVICE DISTRIBUTORS

California

Newport Meat Company, Huntington Beach

Florida

Smith Richardson & Conroy, Miami, Riviera Beach and Tampa

Georgia

Lieber Foods, Atlanta

Illinois

The Bruss Company, Chicago

Louisiana

Carriage Meat Co., Kenner

Maryland

Maryland Hotel Supply, Baltimore

Massachusetts

Dole & Bailey Inc., Woburn

Missouri

Koncen Food Company, St. Louis

Nebraska

Ak-Sar-Ben Beef Co., Omaha

New York

DeBragga & Spittler, New York City

Ohio

Markey Meat Company, Cleveland
Michael's Finer Meats, Columbus

Pennsylvania

George Wells Meats, Philadelphia

Texas

Blue Ribbon Packing, Houston
Texas HRI, Dallas

Washington

MacDonald Meat Company, Seattle

Canada

Vaunclair Meats Limited, Mississauga, Ont.

PACKING PLANTS

National Packing Co., Liberal, Kan.
Moyer Packing Co., Soudertown, Pa.
Gartner-Harf Packing Co., Erie, Pa.
Diggs Packing Co., Columbia, Mo.
Caldwell Packing Co., Windom, Minn.
Dubuque Packing Co., La Mars, Iowa

FABRICATION PLANT

Beef Specialists of Iowa, Hartley, Iowa

For more information or complete addresses, contact:

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West Salem, Ohio 44287

Louis (Mick) Colvin, director Tim Hussman, assistant director
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CAB roll represent only about one-third of the cattle identified on the kill floor as eligible.

At each location, trained packing plant employees first identify live cattle which are Angus or predominantly Angus. As soon as hides are removed, those carcasses are labeled as eligible for CAB. Carcasses are rolled with the CAB logo only after the plant's USDA grader determines they meet the following qualifications: 1, have at least modest (average Choice) marbling; 2, fall within the "A" maturity range; 3, yield grade 3 or better from Prime and no higher than the mid-point of the 3 grade for Choice; 4, have lean within the "fine" texture range; 5, have fine to medium marbling texture; 6, color of lean must be slightly dark red or lighter; and 7, meat must be moderately firm with no indication of softness.

That guarantee means repeat business

And when Texas HRI can buy boxed beef rolled CAB, Renfro knows he can meet the rigid demands of Old San Francisco. Careful natural aging procedures complete the guarantee for the "finest beef in the world," but the product must be young, tender and flavorful to begin with.

And with the CAB roll on every piece of beef cut in their kitchens, Old San Francisco can guarantee customer satisfaction. "With the CAB program," says Sermas, "we don't just say every item we serve is certified maturity A and black Angus—it's marked as such in every package of every box."

Old San Francisco management knows their customers appreciate the quality of the product. Diners comment on it. More importantly, they come back.

"We work on the next visit," emphasizes Sermas. "People here tonight are coming anyway. What we're going to do is work on them for their next visit . . . we give them more than they expect in value, attentive service and stay with our theme. . . . we try to have a happy place. Customers can order a custom-made product—a better, fresher product than they could make at home."

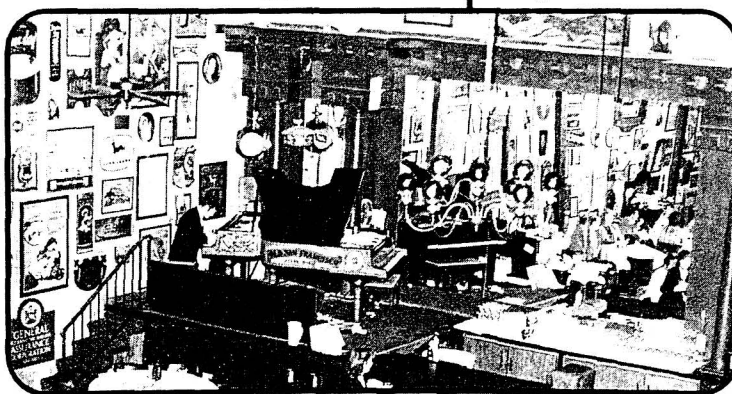
Old San Francisco Steak Houses were founded on the very same principles. A



Tom Renfro (left), executive officer of Texas HRI, and Thurrell Kerns, broker for Old San Francisco, know strict demands of the large account will really test the CAB program. The unique guarantee of quality and consistency offered by CAB has eased many of their frustrations in locating a superior product—to them the future looks bright.



Old San Francisco is the theme here, but a relaxed, fun atmosphere is coupled effectively with first class service and the finest dining. Every effort centers around "the finest beef in the world."



group of Texas businessmen, all successful in their own right, established the restaurants with a commitment to quality and consistency. Luke Postolos played an early role in the business; he enforced quality standards and customer respect.

Besides fine beef, the restaurants center around a "turn-of-the-century San Francisco" theme. Decor, employee attire, music and "the girl on the red velvet swing" are reminiscent of the era's gaiety. A more formal, white table cloth image is retained with first class service and fine dining (down to the finest cream, sour cream, butter, Columbian coffee, aged Swiss cheese and fresh seafood as well as CAB steaks).

It's a successful combination. And the role of CAB is vital.

An appreciated product

"We've always served a superior product," says Sermas, "but it's always taken an inordinate amount of time to amass the amount of beef we need. The advantage to the CAB program is that we finally have priority on the product."

"It has taken a considerable amount of coordination and a broker with a little clout to evolve to this point—to separate the beef before it's slaughtered and follow it all the

way to the table," he adds, crediting Old San Francisco's broker Thurrell Kerns with arranging the supply of CAB through Texas HRI.

Thurrell has been with Old San Francisco since the restaurant opened and he appreciates HRI's ability to provide quality, consistency and now a system that meets Old San Francisco needs. "The CAB program is really a godsend," he summarizes. Reinforcing Sermas's feelings, he adds, "We were going through a lot of extra measures to ensure we obtained the highest quality available."

"This is an enormous undertaking," reflects Sermas, "and that's why it was unheard of in our industry . . . but it's fantastic and the result is just phenomenal."

Get to work, Angus breeders

The Texas Angus Assn. recently recognized Old San Francisco Steak Houses for their decision to serve CAB exclusively. Sermas's comments to Angus breeders?

"We have one million dollars worth of CAB aging in our Dallas plant right now. And we buy \$300,000 CAB a month—but you'd better get to work. By this time next year we plan to spend over \$600,000 a month."

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