

A Super Bowl for Program specialists

Florida hosted not one but two Super Bowls this year. When the opening kickoff was returned, there was no doubt that all in attendance at the 1999 *Certified Angus Beef*™ Specialist Seminar were on the winning team. The 78 attendees, representing 72 food-service and six international distributors, met in Orlando Jan. 21-23 to learn winning plays in the beef marketing game.

Seminar highlights included dining on 14-ounce (oz.) USDA Prime *Certified Angus Beef* strip steaks at the NFL Players Grill. During the evening's festivities, the *Certified Angus Beef* (CAB) Program presented its first Specialist of the Year award.

Joe Boutte, Freedman Food Service, Houston, Texas, received a standing ovation from his peers as he was fitted with a black blazer sporting a gold *Certified Angus Beef* logo and "1998 Specialist of the Year." Attending specialists received recognition for their years of service with bronze pins for up to four years as a CAB Program specialist, silver for five to nine years and gold for 10 or more years.

For Boutte, the jacket also would serve as an MVP award for the electrifying presentation he gave on the leadership, or quarterback, role CAB Program specialists play.

Recalling his boyhood, when he arose at 5 o'clock each morning to help his father operate a small meat-packing plant, Boutte said he learned early that you have to be both tough and smart to win. In keeping with the seminar theme, he presented five key "plays" that CAB Program specialists/quarterbacks need to be able to call and execute.

"Part of being smart is being able to call audibles when we see changes, however," he noted. "The food-service business is like Texas weather: We can count on change."

When the goal is to score points for *Certified Angus Beef* product sales, the key is play



Bob VanStavern (left), *Certified Angus Beef* (CAB) Program consultant, presents Joe Boutte (center) with a black jacket designating him as the 1998 CAB Program Specialist of the Year. At right is Louis "Mick" Colvin, the Program's executive director.

selection, Boutte said. The first five in his play book are innovate, motivate, teach, persevere (strength) and organize. He gave specific examples of each, where he acted as a player-coach to inspire by personal involvement at restaurant openings, waitstaff training, enduring blitzes by competition and setting an organized example.

He also shared an example of the beef primals training schedule he uses for Freedman Food Service and the meat identification test he gives sales representatives. "They have to know a porterhouse from a T-bone," the specialist said.

Boutte stressed the need for positive thinking by CAB Program specialists/quarterbacks. "You can't go into that huddle depressed. You have to throw yourself into it whole hog ... er, whole cow ... and show your team confidence. Our job, as quarterbacks, is to move our people to act," he said, referring to sales action that results in more restaurants licensed and more *Certified Angus Beef* product sold.

Chad Stine, director of the CAB Program's Packing

Division, followed with his own compelling presentation, orienting the food-service professionals on the live-cattle and packing segments of the beef industry. Stine's message of hope to the seminar crowd was rooted in the Program's supply development effort to increase the percentage of Angus-type cattle that meet live-animal specifications, in addition to the product's acceptance rate.

"Those increases can overcome the downturn in the cow cycle," he said, giving a green light for more product sales.

CAB Program Product Utilization Specialist Chris Beck also discussed the possible effect of the proposed addition of a *Certified Angus Beef* Prime product. Noting the National Beef Quality Audit goal of producing 7% USDA Prime beef, Beck said that grade had fallen to just 2% in 1995, but is growing again.

"We need more focus on marbling genetics to keep that growing," he said. Coupling *Certified Angus Beef* product with Prime should help demand for both, Beck said, noting Prime was priced below *Certified Angus Beef* product for eight weeks last summer.

Open roundtables provided opportunities for discussion on restaurant-licensing policies and how to minimize trademark violations. Ed Beckel of Parkway Food Service, Greensburg, Pa., discussed effective marketing formats for this 1998 food-service distributor Marketer of the Year, while Kevin Ryan, Culinary Institute of America, discussed what distributors can do to help licensees develop an effective marketing plan.

Specialists also learned how to get licensees involved in the national advertising campaign and how to implement the *Life Can't Have Too Much Flavor*™ concept in their markets.

Bob VanStavern, the CAB Program consultant who wrote the product specifications, concluded by reminding everyone of Program strong points. "It goes all the way back to the producer. His variability of production and independent nature are part of the reason we exist. The CAB Program removes most of the variability, and no other program does it nearly as well," he said.

VanStavern listed three main reasons that the Program works.

"One, the product. It does what you say it will do because it's based on science. We can worry about quantities, trim or aging, but the basic specs assure you that it works.

"Two, the program. Compliance, menu planning, services, administration — but [the] CAB [Program] has nothing without the ability to implement through you, the licensee.

"Three, the people. The CAB [Program] staff is unmatched, and the distributor network is unmatched in their interest in seeing their accounts succeed."