



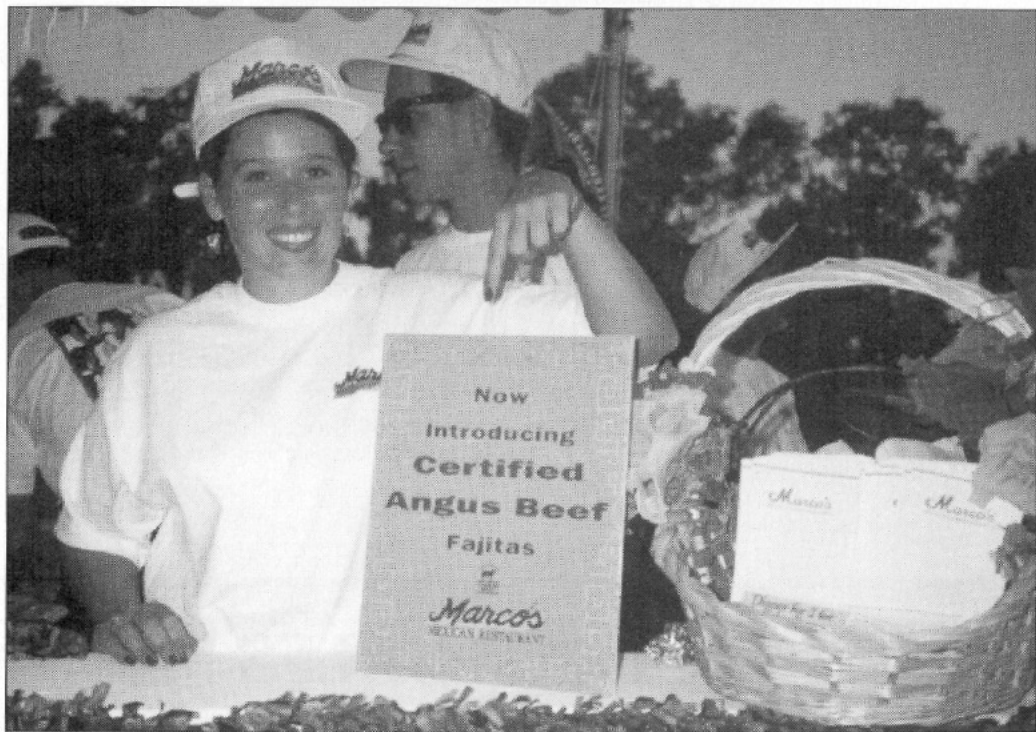
## Marco's Fajitas Pass Texan Taste Test

**B**etter, juicier, tastier fajitas! That's what Marco's Mexican Restaurants, a 20-restaurant chain, offers to Texas consumers. The chain has been licensed since October 1993 to promote Certified Angus Beef™ product. For the first six months, Marco's promoted better, juicier, tastier Certified Angus Beef fajitas with its first, extensive, mainstream campaign.

"Certified Angus Beef product gave us the opportunity to stress quality," says Diane Trepper, Marco's director of marketing. So, Marco's placed the advertising message everywhere. It began with Certified Angus Beef logo stickers on each menu. From there, Diane began training restaurant management and waitstaff. Educational materials included the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Program's "Setting the Record Straight" video, Certified Angus Beef product fact card and a poster in the cooking area listing product attributes.

"We promoted the message to waitstaff as well as consumers," Diane explains. At store level, table tents and posters were used to introduce the product to customers.

Then, Marco's developed a 30-second commercial. The "better, juicier, tastier" advertisement initially played during halftime at Houston Oiler games at the Astrodome. It also played on Houston metro area cable television stations. Additional promotions included radio commercials, newspaper advertisements with coupons and a Certified Angus Beef lo-



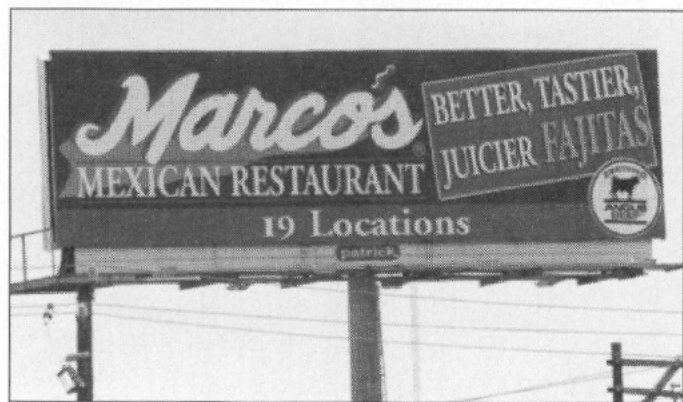
Above: An enthusiastic employee at Marco's Great Taste of Texas booth. Below: Marco's Certified Angus Beef billboard.

go placed on existing Marco's billboards.

To gain exposure in the sports arena, Marco's provides meals for the Houston Oiler players and coaches two nights during the week at the team practice facility.

Houston area food festivals were also used as promotional vehicles during the six-month introductory period. Certified Angus Beef product was served over nachos or in fajitas during the festivals. In addition, a booth at the Great Taste of Houston, the city's largest epicurean event, displayed banners and signs which enticed consumers to try the new fajitas.

"It's all just starting to pay



off," says Diane. "We've had nothing but compliments from customers."

Although Marco's management was leery of an extensive, expensive campaign, Marco's is reaping the benefits of association with a quality product. Houston consumers have also been made aware of Certified

Angus Beef product through Randall's Food Market, a 70-store licensed retail chain, and 36 other licensed area restaurants.

"Certified Angus Beef product is a comfort zone for consumers," says Kathleen Comardo, Freedman Food Service

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**STORY BY CRYSTAL MEIER, CAB PROGRAM**

sales representative handling the Marco's account. "They're aware of how good it is because they've cooked it at home."

Even though the product has experienced tremendous success in Houston, it was not an easy sell. Freedman had to sell Marco's on Certified Angus Beef product consistency as well as the distributor's ability to provide value. Marco's fajita meat was previously marinated on site and inconsistency was a concern. Freedman's ability to centralize the process addressed this challenge.

Freedman Food Service and Marco's management worked for two months to perfect the fajita flavor profile, which is owned by Marco's. "It required a lot of taste testing as well as trial and error," says Comardo.

Additional quality changes helped Marco's target higher levels of customer satisfaction.

New, larger Mexican platters for larger portion sizes provide customers additional value. Further upgrades include thin-

ner, crispier tortilla chips and softer, chewier flour tortillas for fajitas. All these changes have truly made Marco's Mexican

Restaurants the place "where the flavors of Mexico sizzle."

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