

Beefshi

Always known as a versatile meat, beef is finding its way onto shelves next to seafood. Tasked with finding new ways to market prepared beef products, innovative minds at the North American Meat Institute introduced Beefshi in February 2018.

by Lindsay King, assistant editor



“Beefshi is one of those concepts that takes time to understand,” says Eric Mittenthal, the vice president of sustainability at the North American Meat Institute (NAMI). “Initially, people don’t really know what to make of it. Everyone who tries it, loves it though.”

At the mention of sushi, people automatically think of raw fish. When beef is thrown into the mix it is quickly presumed it is also served raw. This is not the case for Beefshi.

A taste for beef

Many prepared beef products are traditionally found behind the meat counter in the deli section of a grocery store. The items Mittenthal and the product development team worked with include: pastrami, roast beef, summer sausage, hot dogs, corned beef, jerky and bologna.

“We are contracted with the Beef Checkoff program to promote prepared beef products,” Mittenthal says.

“Our strategy is to think about these products beyond their classic usage and come up with interesting recipes people would actually want to prepare.”

During a typical work-day commute, Janet Riley — previously the vice president of public affairs at the NAMI — was hit with the idea of combining beef and sushi. The team rolled with the punches to bring eight Beefshi recipes to the table for the launch of the product.

“We teamed up with a chef (Lisa Cherkasky) trained by the Culinary Institute of America to develop the first eight recipes,” Mittenthal says. “We wanted her to be creative, so we just gave her some direction on the types of products we wanted to be in the rolls.”

The recipes Cherkasky came up with far exceeded the team’s expectations. The creative take on sushi piquing

consumers’ interest while leaving their taste buds satisfied.

Versatility

In a family of any size, it can be inferred that food preferences will vary considerably. Most children won’t even give raw fish a try. This greatly deters families from eating at a sushi restaurant, even if only one child has an aversion to the cuisine.

“Beefshi presents a great opportunity for restaurants to provide more choices for people who may not like seafood,” Mittenthal says. “If Beefshi were on the menu, everyone could eat something that they will enjoy.”

Though consumers may be hesitant to try Beefshi at first, NAMI continues to receive glowing reviews of the product.

Currently, sushi is an easy meal to grab off a grocery store shelf. Beefshi



ingredients are scattered through the aisles just waiting to be assembled.

“Many people associate deli meats with a sandwich,” Mittenthal says. “We are trying to redirect the consumer’s idea of how prepared meats can be used in a recipe.”

Recipe roll-call

Some of the ingredients on the easy-to-replicate Beefshi recipes might not appear appetizing, but Mittenthal says even the more peculiar combinations are delicious.

“We have sampled the Texan roll and the Reuben roll the most, both are fairly easy to make,” Mittenthal says. The Texan is similar to a carne asada, while the Reuben is the rolled-up version of the sandwich.

The other six rolls of the original eight include: Inside-Out Wisconsin Maki; New York Deli Roll; Sunday Supper Sushi; Carolina Sushi; Sleeping Dog Sushi; as well as the Hiker’s Roll.

“The first eight recipes were just general ideas to launch the concept of Beefshi,” Mittenthal says. “After that, state beef councils approached us to create rolls for them.”

From this partnership came rolls for seven states: Louisiana, Arizona, California, New York, Minnesota, Missouri and Wyoming.

“We made a recipe and did all of the promotional photography and videos for these state councils to use with the rolls,” Mittenthal adds. Each recipe can be appreciated by everyone but hints at the culture of the state it is modeled after.



But wait, there’s more

Detailed recipes for each roll can be found on www.beefshi.com. Consumers will also be pleased to find nutrition labels are readily available online.

“We actually made how-to videos for each of the rolls and those are online as well,” Mittenthal says. “We have created a foodservice guide to help people that are making large quantities.”

The foodservice guide caters to the 2020 goals for Beefshi. The focus will be getting the product into the foodservice and distribution industries.

“The more we can get Beefshi out there for people to try, the more likely it is that we can get it into grocery stores and restaurants,” Mittenthal says. “Beefshi has a great story to tell; it can be served in a variety of ways while retaining a high nutritional value.” **AJ**

Editor’s note: For more information about Beefshi, full recipes and nutrition labels, visit: www.beefshi.com.

