

Meating the Need

Certified Angus Beef® restaurant partners spread joy in the midst of adversity.

by Nicole Erceg, Certified Angus Beef LLC

It was the hardest day in the restaurant's 25-year history.

"We had to let 40 of our 48-person staff go," says Russ Loub of Little Apple Brewing Company in Manhattan, Kan., calling it the worst day of his life. "It was so hard to say goodbye, but we knew it was the right thing to do. It was the only way to get our people the help they needed."

COVID-19 protection ordinances shut down the restaurant business nationwide. The hard days aren't over, but while many restaurants still sit dark, the magic from within their walls lives on.

New summer plans

On March 9, Chef Vinnie Cimino opened his new restaurant, Summer House, on Lake Erie in Cleveland.

"It was nonstop go, go, go. Great times," he reflected. "It was one of the greatest restaurant openings I've ever been a part of."

Six days later, Ohio closed its restaurants. Less than a week of profits is no time to build up a rainy day fund, so he used the food at his fingertips to keep his team fed. What began as feeding his team quickly evolved into a new non-profit: Cleveland Family Meal. The

organization is feeding hospitality workers in the Cleveland area, many who live paycheck to paycheck, providing them an opportunity to stock up on food and other household supplies for free.



Chef Carla DiLorenzo of Los Tanitos – Restaurante Argentino in Miami feeds stranded Argentinian travelers and hospital workers after her restaurant closed due to COVID-19 health ordinances.

Cimino says the non-profit was created out of necessity, but will continue to feed people after coronavirus is a distant memory.

A taste of home

Stranded in the Miami airport 4,500 miles from home, 200 Argentinian travelers just wanted

their own bed and a hot meal. As the novel coronavirus spread across the world, borders closed and left flights home impossible.

Chef Carla DiLorenzo of Los Tanitos – Restaurante Argentino

couldn't get them to Argentina, but she could give them a taste of it. A meal of *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB) churrasco sirloin flap with rice and beans provided familiar flavors capable of momentarily making the feelings of desertion and chaos fade away.

DiLorenzo didn't stop there. Like many chefs, her superpower is the healing power of food. She also cooked up a feast for the local Baptist Hospital workers, offering a Latin-inspired bite of hope.

Meals on the bus

On a normal day, Chef Joe Urban leads a

team that feeds kids in 101 schools in the Greenville, S.C., school district, including many who get their only meal of the day from his kitchen.

When schools closed, he took his lunches on the road, feeding 20,000 food-insecure children every day. His logistics power crew includes nurses

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checking temperatures for safety among those in the food pickup line and drivers leading a fleet of 90 school buses, getting meals to kids who can't get to the central meal pickup station.

As for the team of more than 300 volunteers, Urban served up a meal of donated CAB brisket to thank them for continuing to get quality food to his students.

Meaty masks

Fire, flair and flavor are traditional accessories for Chefs Kristina and Greg Gaardbo. Their Chicago Culinary Kitchen is a BBQ enthusiast's fantasy, but their creativity lives beyond the walls of the kitchen in their sister business, Shockwaves Apparel.

Because masks are hard to find and sometimes plain, they began making custom versions, fashionable ways to stay safe. Creations include restaurant logos, the image of licking lips, meaty smiles and more.

Fire up the Grill

The Republic Grille in Spring, Texas, is a local steakhouse favorite.



The Republic Grille, Buckhead and Sysco Houston teamed up to deliver a meal of Certified Angus Beef® sirloin to first responders near Spring, Texas.

The crisis didn't stop them from doing what they do best. When their grills went cold, they teamed up with foodservice distributors Sysco Houston and Buckhead to provide protein to eight local fire-station crews and their families.

Picked up in squad cars and fire trucks, the meals included an 8-ounce (oz.) CAB top sirloin and fed more than 170 local firefighters.

Little Apple, big hearts

March 17, 2020, is a day Russ and Kelly Loub will never forget. In the fray of parting with their staff, they didn't dwell in the pain but channeled it into action. The first step, a GoFundMe page to help provide their workers financial aid, quickly raised \$12,000. Then, they ceased carryout orders to create care packages, emptying their freezers to feed the team that normally serves Little Apple Brewing Co. diners.

The restaurant, an award-winning beef industry partner and longtime CAB licensee, celebrated its 25th anniversary with a silent dining room.

"I just hope we can survive this," Loub says.

They've shifted their business, creating LABCo Market, playing off the restaurant's acronym. Having launched a self-build website, they continue to serve up quality proteins, offering a curbside experience.

"Retail meats were always something we wanted to do," Russ says, even though this wasn't how he'd planned on getting it done.

Nevertheless, the man who calls sausage-making "therapy" keeps searching for ways to get his team back in business and selling the best Angus beef.

Heroism isn't a word any of these foodservice innovators would use to define their acts of service. In the hospitality industry, serving others is simply the creed. Taking care of people through the power of a good meal, it's just what you do.

Each is proof that even in times of crisis, restaurants still bustle with activity, filled with quality beef and great people, if you just know where to look. [AJ](#)

