

Smell What's Cooking

An Iowa trio makes winning the Black Kettle Award quick and easy.

Story and photos by **Heather Hopper**



► Winning the Paul St. Blanc Black Kettle Award was the Iowa Quick-N-Easy™ senior team. Members are (from left) Brittania Carlson, Cherokee; Kendall Bremer, Blakesburg; and Abby Janssen, Bloomfield.

Busy-Day Beef

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| 2 cups CAB® Quick-N-Easy™ Pot Roast with Gravy, cubed | 1 bag (16 oz.) frozen vegetable combination, thawed and drained |
| 1 jar (8 oz.) pasteurized processed cheese spread | 4 cups frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed |
| ¾ cup milk | ¼ tsp. black pepper |

In a 9x13-inch microwave-safe dish, combine cheese spread and milk. Cook covered on high for 3 minutes, stir. Add beef, vegetables, potatoes and black pepper. Cook covered 14 minutes or until heated through. Stir mixture halfway through cooking time. Let stand 5 minutes. Serves 4-6.

Think back to when time didn't matter and black-and-white TV was "huge." Remember old television shows that left you feeling good? How about *Leave It to Beaver*? If you can remember that show, you can imagine why the senior "Quick-N-Easy™" team from Iowa won the coveted Black Kettle Award July 9 at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Milwaukee, Wis.

Sponsored by the American Angus Auxiliary, the All-American Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) Cook-Off began in 1983 as an educational project for the junior members. Initially, the contest was only separated into age divisions. It has grown to include categories for both fresh meat and Quick-N-Easy products.

The top honor in the contest is known as the "Paul St. Blanc Black Kettle Award." The award was created in 2000 in memory of the past Cook-Off champion from Louisiana who specialized in cooking jambalaya in his black kettle.

The Iowa senior team — Kendall Bremer, Blakesburg, as Beaver; Abby Janssen, Bloomfield, as June Cleaver; and Brittania Carlson, Cherokee, as the Technology Fairy — brought a taste of the past to this year's Cook-Off and blended it perfectly into a winning futuristic presentation.

"We had a great attitude," Brittania says. "We believe in the CAB product and just wanted to have fun."

Getting started

It all began at the 2001 NJAS, when Abby was on the first-place overall intermediate Cook-Off team in the Quick-N-Easy category.

"I saw Abby do Cook-Off last year and thought it would be neat to do," Kendall says.

The two discussed

being on a team together for the 2002 national competition in Wisconsin. "It was kind of a joke that turned into a reality," Abby remembers. But they still needed a third person.

Kendall and Brittania attend Iowa State University, Ames, together, and while they were discussing the national show, the Cook-Off contest came up. "I just asked her to be the third person," Kendall says. With that, the 2002 Iowa senior Quick-N-Easy team was born.

The ingredients

With two rookies and her being the seasoned veteran, Abby quickly became the team leader. She and her dad, Alan Janssen, decided to write a skit that had to do with the past butting into the future.

"My family just got a satellite dish, and my parents really like to watch *Leave It to Beaver*," she explains. Thinking that the show might be a possible skit idea, the characters of Beaver, Mrs. Cleaver and the Technology Fairy seemed right for the cast.

Everyone, from the juniors to the parents, helped with the Cook-Off. The group decided on "Busy-Day Beef" for the recipe, the basics of which they found in a cookbook.

"We just made a few changes to the recipe to make it healthier and more practical," Abby says.

Audrey Bremer, Kendall's mother, helped plan the side dish and coordinated the colors and textures of the meal. They researched information on the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Web site, using the "What's New" icon to get information about the Quick-N-Easy Pot Roast product to incorporate into the skit.

"There was a lot of planning over the phone," says Janice Carlson, Brittania's mother. Janice and Brittania were in charge of costumes.

Beaver's attire consisted of an old coat, pants that were several sizes too big and "80-year-old shoes," Kendall says. Mrs. Cleaver was decked out in a white dress with turquoise ribbons,

grandma's jewelry and a huge hat with big flowers. Brittnia wore her prom dress from her junior year in high school. A fairy wand completed the outfit.

"We had knowledgeable, intelligent juniors to work with," Denise Janssen, Abby's mother, says. Case in point, Kendall didn't see the script until 2:30 a.m. Monday, and Brittnia didn't see it until later that morning, with the Cook-Off only one day away.

"There were changes in the script even after we saw it," Kendall recalls. "I never said the same thing twice — we just had a basic idea of what needed to be said."

The performance

Beaver: "What's for supper? I'm starved!"

June Cleaver: "I don't know. I just got home. It's been so hectic today."

Beaver: "Gee, too bad we couldn't just wish for some kind of fairy that could tap her wand

and make supper."

The Technology Fairy to the rescue.

"Since they were back in the past, they didn't know what a microwave was," Brittnia explains. "When I tried to explain how quick this meal was, they didn't understand how it was possible. That is when I whooshed off the tablecloth." That part of the skit got the most laughs.

"Beaver thought the microwave was an outer space alien zapper," Abby says.

When the team members finished their performance, they invited the judges to sit at a table decorated with pink Russell Wright dishes, stainless steel flatware and matching glassware to fit the 1950s. The tablecloth was pink-flowered linen and was finished off with a blue vase and flowers.

"We tried to keep it authentic," Denise says.



The recipe for success

Anne Patton Schubert, Cook-Off coordinator, says, "They really highlighted what

quick-and-easy is supposed to be. The group did a great job of explaining why CAB Quick-N-Easy is great for the consumer."

The team agrees winning wasn't really the main goal. "It was more for fun than competition," Abby recalls. "You look in the mirror when you are all dressed up and say, 'Yeah, I am going to make a fool of myself.'"

Kendall says it was fun trying something different, especially when not many people could see him doing this event. "A friend of mine came to see the skit, and as soon as he saw my costume he began to laugh," he adds. The rest of the week Kendall was referred to as Beaver.

All the pieces seemed to fit for Iowa, from the food to the

characters. The personalities of each participant came out in each character, the parents recall.

"My teammates were great to work with; I couldn't ask for better," Kendall says.

The best part about the Cook-Off was putting it all together, Brittnia says. "Just to see each other in a different atmosphere, doing something fun and for your state — it was worth it."

The contest gives juniors a chance to grow and experience new things, outside the cattle barn. "It develops the ability to sell yourself," Kendall says. "I encourage everyone to try it at least once."

While he and Brittnia will not be returning as junior members next year, Abby is already cooking up ideas to get in on the fun. "That is the best part of the national show," she says. "In one week you can be a photographer, an actor and a speaker, and at the same time show cattle."

