

Change is a Good Thing

Tennessee cattleman and restaurateur completes his term as Certified Angus Beef board chair.

by Kylee Kohls, Certified Angus Beef LLC

From the moment his boots hit the dirt on the way to the barn to the time he switches off the lights and locks the door of the Hickory House Restaurant, Jonathan Perry is committed to the beef business.

The 2021 Chairman of the Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Board of Directors brings a unique perspective to the table. By day, he's a cattleman. For 23 years, he's been general manager of Deer Valley Farm, a 6,500-acre operation where 2,000 registered Angus cows roam and 1,500 acres of crops are harvested annually.

At night, Perry is meat cutter and cook at Hickory House Restaurant in Pulaski, Tenn., which he has owned with his wife, Jackie, since 2014.

Angus cattle haven't always filled Deer Valley's pastures. Sixteen years ago, Perry and Fred Clark, owner of Deer Valley Farms, transitioned the herd to the Business Breed. They haven't looked back since.

"The need for Angus genetics was growing daily, and the demand for our product through CAB was taking over every other breed in the industry," Perry says. "We decided that if we were going to be sustainable, stay here for the long haul, have a program that was

Clark, Perry's mentor and friend, reminds Perry often: "Just because we've done it that way before doesn't mean we have to keep doing it that way."

Navigating the pandemic as a cattleman and restaurateur was "eye-opening" to how fast things are changing.

"We have to be more prepared, more adaptable and more willing to embrace change to serve that consumer in any way possible," Perry says. "We have to make cattle practical and sustainable, but we also have to continue to improve carcass yield, and carcass merit to make a high-quality



As chairman of the Certified Angus Beef board, Jonathan Perry — or J.P. as he's known to friends — brought a broad perspective from his work as breeder and restaurateur.

productive and could stand on its own two feet — we had to venture into the Angus breed and change directions."

Perry seeks ways to improve not only Deer Valley's herd but the Angus breed, too. He leans into others to keep the breed progressing forward and help others learn, too.

product, so that we can hold our place in the market."

He's gained an appreciation for the evolving marketplace since opening the Hickory House in 2014, and even more so in the last year serving as chairman.

"CAB brings quality product into the marketplace by supporting

licensees and by putting the right product in the right place to make people successful in the foodservice and retail industries,” Perry says.

The principles of integrity and dedication to quality driving his farm are carried into the restaurant and the grocery store.

“It means everything for us to serve CAB in our restaurant,” Perry explains. “One, it’s a product that we had such a stake in producing and developing. And two, we know that our customer is getting the most consistent, high-quality eating product in the industry.”

His guests’ eating experience is something Perry takes personally.

He doesn’t need a scale to perfectly slice the 14-ounce ribeye off the roll in the back of the restaurant. It’s simply second nature.

“The restaurant is my haven away from the world,” he says. “It’s been a real labor of love.”

A student of the world around him, Perry surrounds himself with people he can learn from and brings others under his wing to learn alongside him, says John Stika, CAB president. J.P.’s bright and easy-



going personality draws others into conversations where both are sure to leave with a new perspective or piece of knowledge.

“He’s an ambassador for the Angus breed, CAB and all those who

serve the beef business, constantly reminding cattlemen and culinary colleagues of all that the CAB brand has to offer,” Stika says.

He is grateful to have met so many folks throughout his year of service and is ever confident in the CAB brand’s ability to evolve through future changes in demands and resources.

“They are a wealth of knowledge and resources, and they’re there to help you every step of the way,” Perry says.

It has been a challenging yet rewarding year, not unlike a busy night at the Hickory House. After dinner’s served and the lights go out at the restaurant, Perry’s reminded why he serves: “Good food, friends and fellowship. That’s what it’s all about.” [AJ](#)

