



Angus Stakes

by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Kitchen conundrum

I'm a good cook — not that anyone would know it. Mom was a great cook, and the cooks in Shelby County that contributed to our 4-H club project, the Fest Hall, Mount Zion and our school lunch program, etc., were stellar. I even learned to cook a batch of liver and onions I could eat and sort of like in a cooking class at the University of Missouri.

Wrong timing

When we have a chance to, one of Todd's and my favorite things to do together is to cook — whether it's a fridge cleanout with herbs from the patio or something designed around a special ingredient we found at the store. We love a variety of flavor, and, as long as it's not snails or body parts that just aren't appetizing, we're willing to explore new ingredients and seasonings.

The big *however*, though, is rarely do we get the time. With the schedule we've kept the last few years, we're lucky if we have basics in the refrigerator that we trust to still be edible, let alone fresh ingredients. Then there's the limitation that if we can't get it on the plate within 45 minutes, well, we've lost our enthusiasm.

That's what attracted me to the pitch Nick Taranto and Josh Hix made for Plated on an episode of *Shark Tank* back in 2014. Plated is a gourmet meal, fresh-food delivery service. Customers subscribe to receive a box of fresh ingredients to cook

meals with recipes by celebrity chefs.

While updates on the venture aren't reporting it to be profitable yet, that isn't for lack of orders. Their volume of business is impressive, and competitors Blue Apron and Hello Fresh are ramping up their marketing efforts.

Some observations

These two Harvard business grads and their competitors recognized a kitchen conundrum: A segment of consumers desire to cook nutritious, extraordinary meals in the home, but they do not have the time or desire to source ingredients, and they may not have the knowledge of how to put the meals together. Ta-da: fresh ingredients at your doorstep with the instructions for how to prepare a single meal to a dinner party.

These companies are appealing to foodies, who place importance on not eating the average fare. They want quality; they just don't want to shop for it, and they're happy if you put it in a box and deliver it to them

— as long as you don't let them down.

Read that sentence again substituting trailer for box. Does that sound familiar? How many of your customers want to produce a quality product, but they lack the time and focus to source their genetics themselves?

From recipe cards to how-to videos available online, these companies are providing instructions in a manner that is exciting rather than embarrassing. Customers can access the instructions on their own schedule, in the privacy of their home and in as much detail as they prefer.

All three of these food-delivery services address consumer hot buttons such as antibiotics, local sources, health aspects and sustainable production systems.

How does it relate?

Here are a couple take-homes.

No. 1: Your future as a seedstock provider rests on meeting customer needs. Needs change over time, so your success as a seedstock provider will depend on your ability to observe current and potential customers and recognize those emerging conundrums for which you can provide a solution.

No. 2: Might our industry want to watch this market segment for opportunities to supply beef, beef products and information about producing beef? Their audience is precious to us as beef producers.

No. 3: There may be individual opportunities to supply local, sustainable beef.

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