

# New Specialty Steak Cut

University of Nevada–Reno research shows value to meat industry, restaurants and premier eating experience for consumers.

by Mike Wolterbeek, University of Nevada–Reno

Like a diamond in the rough, a small cut of beef that meat cutters throw in with ground meat is now being looked at as a high-end delicacy by researchers at the University of Nevada–Reno.

The small, quarter-moon-shaped slice of beef that has a taste and tenderness that outclasses any other cut except filet mignon made its debut in late August for media, meat industry representatives and university officials in a private tasting.

Assistant Professor of Meat Science Amilton de Mello, who has redeveloped the use for the piece of meat, talked about the science behind the cut, its ease of trimming and profitability for the meat-processing industry, as well as the potential for restaurants to offer it as a premier menu item. The Bonanza cut is juicy, extremely tender and very marbled. The petite slice of beef is ideal for grilling and practically melts in your mouth.

“Chefs and restaurants will love this cut. It can be portioned for many sizes of servings,” de Mello, from the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources, said. “And for meat producers, it offers a higher price point and more profits by taking this cut in a new direction.”

## Chef tasting

The meat science program hosted the private tasting of the Bonanza cut. Kaimi Coonrad, executive chef of Reno’s The Cheese Board American Bistro and Catering Co. prepared and served the delicacy.

“It can be served in a variety of ways, grilling on a flat top, grill or even a cast-iron skillet,” Coonrad said. “A light marinade will complement the innate flavor of the meat. The first bite gives a blast of flavor and then the pure flavor of the beef comes through.”

Coonrad, with 20 years of experience as a chef, trained at both the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco and the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. He created two themes for the Bonanza cut: Mediterranean and Southwest, with six recipes. One of the recipes, the Southwest



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► Chef Kaimi Coonrad shows off the Bonanza Cut, a new specialty cut that has been used for ground meat and is now being considered one of the best, though comparatively quite small, delicacy items on par with filet mignon.

Bonanza cut, El Paso style, features a tangy southwest marinade for the cuts served with roasted corn and black bean salad with baked potato wedges and a jalapeño aioli garnish.

“No matter which style you prepare this, you don’t want to marinate this cut for long, only 30 minutes,” Coonrad said. “The meat is tasty all on its own, and these recipes make it great for either lunches or dinners. It’s easy to portion and will have a good price point for restaurants.”

Consumers won’t find the Bonanza cut in the meat department or restaurants yet. It will be up to the meat purveyors, such as JBS, who funded de Mello’s research, to make the cut available.

## Quest for new cut of meat

De Mello started developing this new cut in 2014 while working for the beef industry. With support from JBS, he conducted research on the cut at the university beginning in 2015 and found it compared extremely well against other cuts of beef.

The objective of the experiment was to evaluate tenderness and cooking yields of the *M. infraspinatus* caudal tip (the very far end of the flat-iron steak) and verify the opportunity of exploring this cut as an added-value product. Research found that the Bonanza cut has superior marbling and higher fat content compared to other meat cuts, including the flat-iron steak.

“Meat processors will like this specialty cut for a number of reasons, one because it’s very easy to trim,” de Mello said. “When you separate the chuck and the ribs, the flat-iron steak goes one way — with the chuck — and the relatively small end stays with the rib side; this is the Bonanza cut.”

“The industry will also like it because instead of selling it for \$1 a pound as lower-quality meat, they can showcase it for what it is: a premium cut worth more like \$5 a pound.”

The small cut yields two pieces per beef carcass that, combined, weigh about a half of a pound. By angling the cut when breaking the ribs, meat cutters will gain more volume for the Bonanza cut.

“This small volume makes this cut even more special based on its high quality and low availability,” de Mello said. “Due to its eating characteristics and unique texture, the Bonanza cut is a new alternative to replace traditional beef cuts in many different recipes.”

The meat science program at the university hired de Mello in December 2015 and opened his new meat research lab. In addition to his research, he teaches about the meat industry, food safety and quality systems and advanced meat science in the university’s Department of Agriculture, Nutrition and Veterinary Sciences.

The university’s experiment station houses the meat processing plant, feedlot facilities, cattle working areas and 650 acres of irrigated pasture, all just 15 minutes from the main campus in downtown Reno.



**Editor’s Note:** Mike Wolterbeek is communications officer for the University of Nevada–Reno.