



► **Left:** Samy constantly consults with his distributor's CAB representatives to gain new ideas and recipes for the products he buys.

## Tasty, tender beef for the most discriminating customers.

Story & photos by **Lyndee Stabel**

**R**unning a restaurant anywhere has its challenges, but imagine a steak house right in the heart of cattle feeding country. The co-owner and manager of Samy's Spirits and Steakhouse in Garden City, Kan., can tell you about great expectations.

Amro Samy and his staff must ensure a satisfying beef-eating experience for the people who make their living creating some of the best beef in the world.

In 2007, he took over a hospitality business that also includes a catering service and the Clarion Inn and Conference Center with co-owners Duane and Kathy Koster of Garden City.

"When we opened, our goal was to be known for serving the best steaks in the area," Samy says, "because so many of our customers are feedlot owners, cattle buyers or otherwise involved in that industry."

Taking that goal seriously, he raised the bar after a couple of years and licensed the steak house as a *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand partner. Customers tasted the difference and talked about it. "We get compliments on the consistency of our beef," he says.

But even with the right product, perfection is not guaranteed, says Sam Hands, commercial Angus rancher and feeder whose family owns the nearby CAB-award-winning Triangle H Grain & Cattle Co.

"Cookery is a critical step," says this regular customer.

"I understand everything that must occur from conception to the packer, and I know all the requirements that must be met for beef to qualify for the CAB brand," Hands says. "So it's very disappointing if a chef doesn't prepare it properly, because then it was all for nothing."

### Ensuring good beef

Not to worry in this case, he says, praising

quality to continually increase," says Larry Jones, owner of the JO Cattle Co. of Holcomb, Kan.

And while those technical steps are keys, the steak house manager says his greatest inspiration comes directly from the customers. That's why he spends a lot of time greeting and visiting with guests.

"It's important for me to be out there with them because of everything I can learn from



► Located in the heart of cattle country, Amro Samy and his staff ensure a satisfying beef-eating experience at Samy's Spirits and Steakhouse in Garden City, Kan.

them,” Samy says. “Your customers will tell you what they want, and I want them to have the opportunity to share their likes and dislikes.”

Some of his customers may go a step further. When Jones enjoys a meal at Samy’s, he often shares eating experiences he’s had at other establishments, sometimes even including a recipe.

“I started doing it because it was something I could do to help him while promoting beef at the same time,” Jones says. “And that’s the great thing about Samy — he’s not afraid to try them.”

### Entertaining atmosphere

During one of those exchanges, the idea came up to partner with the Kansas Beef Council in hosting a chef competition. It would bring in a lot of people, surely, but Samy decided to use the event as a means of giving back to the community, as well.

From across the state, 10 chefs came to compete, each trying to win the judges’ approval using the cut of beef and materials supplied. First place won \$2,000; second, \$1,000 and third \$500. But there were more winners.

Proceeds from public tickets — some \$7,000 — were donated to The United Way. And the community also won by that initial success, because a second chefs’ challenge was set for January 2012.

Cooking contests may not take place every day, but there is never a shortage of entertainment for steak house guests. Depending on the day, they can enjoy anything from a music deejay to dueling pianos.

“Today it is the place to go in Garden City, whether you’re looking for a night out, you’re entertaining or you just want to be entertained,” Hands says. Samy is the main reason, he adds. “He’s full of enthusiasm and the desire to entertain and please people. That, along with the style and decoration, creates the perfect atmosphere.”

That goes for people of all ages, as anyone could see at the restaurant’s December open house. Children could sit on Santa’s knee, take a ride in a carriage or even decorate their own sugar cookie. “We’re all about family,” Samy says. “It’s a positive for me anytime I can help make a memory for the kids.”

Location and clientele may pose extraordinary challenges, but Samy wouldn’t want it any other way.

“I’m never satisfied,” he says. “I’m always competing with myself, reaching to do better. And the greatest reward is when my guests leave happy.”



**Editor’s Note:** Lyndee Stabel is a freelance writer for Certified Angus Beef LLC.



► Kathy Koster (right) and her husband, Duane, are Amro Samy’s (left) partners in the steak house.



► People of all ages enjoy the restaurant’s December open house, during which children can sit on Santa’s knee, take a ride in a carriage or even decorate their own sugar cookie.



► Head chef Steve Tzul sets out some desserts.