



Brand News

► News and highlights from **Certified Angus Beef LLC**,* compiled by **Laura Conaway**, Certified Angus Beef LLC

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restaurant listings, retail store locations
and cooking information, visit
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Winning 'Battle of the Breeds'

Start with the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand. Add Jim Baldrige's Secret Seasoning. Cook to desired doneness.

That simple recipe won both a Nebraska grilling competition and a fan-voted taste test.

"When you start out with meat like that, all you have to do is heat it up," said Angus producer Dick Hollman of Hallam, Neb. He helped organize the Nebraska Angus Association's involvement in the "Battle of the Breeds Tailgate."

The inaugural event took place as part of the Nebraska Cattlemen's Classic, a livestock exposition hosted each February in Kearney, Neb.

The serving crew wished for leftovers. Instead, they dished out more than 250 samples, nearly every bit of the 67 pounds (lb.) of 30-day dry-aged CAB Prime New York strip they started out grilling. They used tortillas for ease of serving and offered tea and lemonade, but the crowd came for the beef.

"We could barely keep up," Hollman said.

The steady lines gave a good indication, but attendees also voted by paper ballot. The beef-eaters chose among the five breeds represented for three categories: Best Meat, Best Display and Best Hospitality.

Angus won both Best Meat and Best Display, earning two complimentary ads in next year's event program.

"It was an opportunity to educate about CAB, not only to producers but also the public that was there," said Paul Dykstra, beef cattle specialist for CAB.

"Cattlemen and Consumers Day" was designed to get community members out to the Buffalo County Fairgrounds and explore the Classic.

Dykstra helped a handful of the state's Angus breeders serve up the meat, cooked by Hollman and fellow producer Bob Tiedeman.

"Members of the Nebraska Angus Association were serving and visiting with people, telling them about the product," he said.

The booth and brochures helped support the message that high-quality cattle create high-quality beef.

Hollman's former intern, Megan Behlen, played guitar and sang a couple of selections, including an Angus-themed number set to the tune of "Home on the Range."

"Everyone got along really well, and we had a lot of fun," Hollman said.

In addition to the popular vote, there was a formal "Classic Steak Cook-off" in which nine teams all started with the same beef and then a panel of judges selected the winner based on appearance, doneness and taste.

Hollman and Tiedeman were sponsored by the Nebraska Angus Association and also took home top prize in that jackpot-style contest.

"We had a good night," Hollman said. "It couldn't have been more successful."



*Certified Angus Beef LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of the American Angus Association.



Communication, great beef at Cattle Industry Convention

Going to an event that carries the hashtag #beefmeet, you might expect to find the CAB brand. When that event is the Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show, you'd be right. CAB's supply development team and other staff traveled to San Diego, Calif., for the Jan. 27-29 convention.

"It's one of those annual events that brings people from all over the beef business together, so we're happy to be involved, building relationships and representing the brand," said Mark McCully, CAB vice president of supply.

Attendees had many chances to enjoy CAB product, from the opening Cattlemen's College® reception through the trade show opening the next evening. In all, there were 12 different offerings that ranged from sirloin steak and caramelized onion sandwiches to a breakfast corned-beef hash.

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Meanwhile at the ECC

Since its establishment in February 2012, the CAB Education & Culinary Center (ECC) has served as a unique gathering place. Partners in and outside of the beef industry are gaining insight into the brand and the quality beef that defines it.

From cattlemen to media guests and scientists to chefs, more than 225 groups have visited the Wooster, Ohio, venue from all parts of the world. This ECC column within Brand News will help keep producers current on recent events there.

- ▶ Sysco Jacksonville, Feb. 3-4, 17-18
- ▶ Greenhouse Tavern Chef training, Feb. 8
- ▶ Cowfish Sushi Burger Bar, Feb. 9
- ▶ Sysco Los Angeles, Feb. 15-16
- ▶ Wooster Healthy Living event, Feb. 23
- ▶ Metropolitan Hospitality Group, Feb. 28-29
- ▶ Sysco Baltimore, Feb. 29

Digital extras

Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) and the American Angus Association provide these video segments. Readers of our digital edition can click on the photo to launch the respective YouTube video. The url (www ...) for each video is also provided for our print edition readers.



Paul Dykstra, beef cattle specialist for the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand, describes the perfect feedlot steer for today's market, with implications for the balanced genetics required. Here's the clip: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjk9A2rf7uo.



Kansas seedstock producer Matt Perrier relies on keeping up-to-date records and modern tools to keep maternal and carcass traits cohesive within his herd. Here's the clip: www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqN7hHi7Ss8&feature=youtu.be.



Michael Bishop, a senior market development specialist for Illumina, talks about the current state and the future of genomics in the beef community. Here's the clip: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnggSdKlL34.



Leading Tennessee Angus producer Jonathon Perry discusses what it takes to get your seedstock herd on track to become a successful program. Here's the clip: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fq6BzUAMD4Q.

“Besides getting to take in the formal program and build our knowledge base, we also use it as a venue to pull together producers and other partners,” McCully said. For example, meetings focused on upcoming research projects and helped craft an agenda for this summer’s Feeding Quality Forum.

Along with other members of the U.S. Roundtable on Sustainable Beef, President John Stika served on a panel, “Why Does Sustainability Matter? What Are We Looking For? An End-Users Perspective.”

“We’re all focused on the same end point,” Stika said. “This is not a threat. It’s an opportunity.”

Next year’s meeting is slated for Feb. 1-3 in Nashville, Tenn.

For more details on the brand’s take on all things Cattle Industry Convention, search for those keywords on the Black Ink Blog at www.blackinkwithcab.com.

New CAB studio brings possibility

If ever a delectable photograph has captured your senses, rest assured there’s a cost associated with the victory. \$2,500 — at least that was the average nearly 10 years ago (today’s costs would be double) when the brand began looking into less costly alternatives that capitalize on staff talent.

Mark Merryweather first walked the halls of CAB as a graphic designer in the 1990s, but the digital age was coming and his inquisitive mind led him to dabble with the idea of shooting “still-life” photography in house.

“It started with point-of-sale materials, a staff photo here and there, things that needed to be done really quick,” he says. “There were a lot of photos that weren’t being taken because they were too expensive.”

As skill levels grew, so did the responsibilities of the group. Working out of an 12 × 12 space, he and the culinary team, often led by Chef Michael Ollier, created photos that led to recipes desired and pounds sold.

Cayman cookout

Staff from CAB packed up their sandals and headed toward the Cayman Islands for the annual Cayman Cookout on a late winter day. This four-day beachfront celebration of food and wine features some of the world’s most recognized chefs, who view the culinary demonstrations and indulge on dinners from other top chefs.

“Our primary goal is to focus on getting that brand awareness and ultra-premium brand positioning among elite chefs through the event,” says Maggie O’Quinn, CAB executive marketing manager.

Brand Corporate Chef Tony Biggs joined his peers to demonstrate how to make the most of CAB in the kitchen.

After participating in such events, chefs take home new skills and ideas to try in their own restaurants.

“Chefs were so wowed by what Chef Tony could do with a steak,” O’Quinn describes. “With Tony’s help, we are establishing credibility and innovating at a powerful level.”

Not only are chefs helping the beef industry by including beef on their menus, but also sharing the rancher’s story. Now more than ever, they crave the connection back to the ranch.

“The biggest thing we heard all week from chefs was that they wanted to know where their meat came from, and what rancher helped create this gorgeous steak,” O’Quinn says. “They want to understand the ‘who’ as much as they want to understand the ‘what.’”

That’s CAB’s opportunity and responsibility, she adds.

“The greatest part of my job and the reason I love what I do is because I get to connect that chef to the rancher,” O’Quinn says. “The chefs really elevate our brand to the next level and take pride in our product.”



With the brand’s recent building expansion, that room was replaced with an area more spacious and, as a result, more effective.

“We’re able to do from 80 to 100 photos a year. Compare that to the 16 we used to do in a two-year span,” Merryweather recalls, “not to mention the reduction in cost.”

A typical photo shoot can take up to three days when accounting for pre- and postproduction time. The shoot itself will take an average 2½ hours and includes a prop stylist, food stylist/chef and photographer.

Carrie Wellert was recently hired as video production specialist.

“Ninety percent to 95% of what we shoot are edible items,” Merryweather says, noting that’s not as common as it may seem. “We’re very fortunate with a great product that’s top quality so there’s no trickery with the beef.”

Walk into the new studio and you’ll no longer feel the confines of an office. No matter the snow or conditions outside, within its walls Merryweather can create whatever environment he wishes. Barely dim or dark,

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natural or artificial light, options are nearly limitless. A few more feet of space make room for a world of possibilities.

The controlled environment, he says, “gives us the ability to address our partners’ needs in a greater capacity.”

In addition to a fully functional kitchen, prop room and audio room, the space hosts a brick wall on one side and an 1870 barn door on the other. An addition of a green screen offers viewers a look and feel of being on the ranch — something Merryweather says is becoming increasingly popular.

“We’ve completed seven interviews this month,” he says, projecting 70 for the 2016 year. That’s not to mention the more detailed *Meat Minutes*, Specialist of the Year videos and those used for the brand’s Annual Conference.

“I gotta tell you, I love it,” Merryweather beams. “I couldn’t be happier to have this dedicated space to serve our partners.”

Team Sawyer visits the ECC

In early February, the Education & Culinary Center (ECC) in Wooster received a special visit from a team of Midwest chef legends. Top chef Jonathan Sawyer and his team worked with CAB to explore opportunities in the beef industry.

“Jonathan wanted his guys in the kitchen who handle day-to-day operations, such as ordering the product, to understand why he stays loyal to the brand and why they only source *Certified Angus Beef*,” said Bryan Schaaf, public relations and marketing manager for the brand.

Chefs with Team Sawyer are open to trying new things in the restaurant industry, pushing the boundaries and bending the rules of culinary. While at the ECC, they



► Chefs with Team Sawyer are open to trying new things in the restaurant industry, pushing the boundaries and bending the rules of culinary. While at the ECC, they worked with “Dr. Phil” Bass, CAB corporate meat scientist, to discuss how to use more beef applications and not just a steak or roast.

Story behind the numbers: 12 to 15 minutes

Decisions can often come down to compromise. “Is X worth the Y hours of work I’ll have to put in to pay for it?”

Perhaps today’s consumer isn’t wrestling with this formula as they weigh how much beef costs. If they are, chances are they’ll find a number like 12 or 15.

According to CattleFax’s Randy Blach, the average consumer has to work 12-15 minutes to pay for a pound of Choice beef.

That’s down from more than 30 minutes in the 1970s and 1980s.

The senior market analyst says that helps explain why we continue to sell high-quality beef, even when prices rose so sharply the past few years.

“Sometimes we all get more worried about those price points than maybe the consumer does,” Blach said at CAB’s annual conference in September.

Brand sales continued to rise, even as prices did, too. In short, beef-eaters calculated (either subconsciously or through quick math) what the product costs them, and decided it was worth it.

Why?

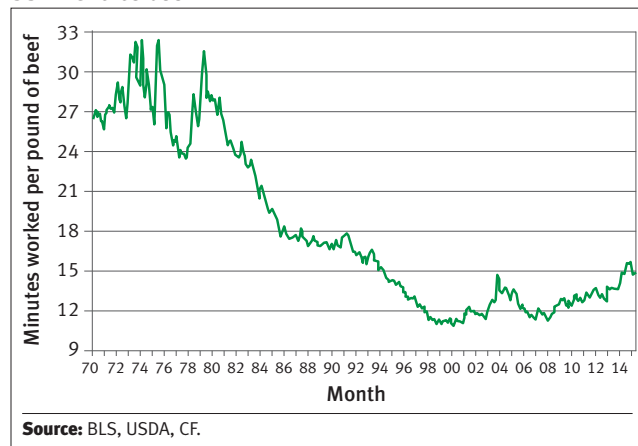
“We’re producing the highest-quality product that we have in decades,” he says. “Why do we see these millennials coming back to meat, coming back to beef? Because it’s good.”

The trends look positive, too.

“The millennials want more high-quality protein in their diets,” Blach says. “That’s an opportunity for each and every one of us.”

Check back next month for another story behind the numbers.

Fig. 1: Minutes worked for U.S. consumer to pay for 1 pound of USDA Choice beef



Source: BLS, USDA, CF.

worked with “Dr. Phil” Bass, CAB corporate meat scientist, to discuss how to use more beef applications and not just a steak or roast.

“We learned just as much from them in terms of trends and what’s coming in the restaurant industry as they learned from us in

terms of meat fabrication and what types of alternative cuts they can use when something isn’t available,” Schaaf said.

Chefs explored different cuts of the carcass and learned where they can apply them to their menus. One of the main things they took away from their time at the ECC was the different uses for the chuck.

“There are so many cool little nuggets in the chuck that often get overlooked by chefs,” Schaaf explained. “Chuck is not what you would see at most restaurant levels, so it plays into what they like to do in their restaurants, which is stand out from the rest.”

The visiting team was one that consistently exceeds consumer expectations of their beef experience.

“Team Sawyer impacts the beef industry simply with exposure to a national audience of our product,” Schaaf said. “This is a group tied to elite restaurants that are mentioned in the media quite often, and most of the time we are mentioned alongside of them.”



Editor’s Note: Laura Conaway is producer communications specialist for Certified Angus Beef LLC.