



# Brand News

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

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► Efrain Ramirez, the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand manager for Atlantic Foods Corp. in the South American nation of Colombia, received the 2017 Specialist of the Year award.



## Specialist of the Year

He once dreamed of working on Wall Street, trading stocks and bonds. Now he sells beef, but he wouldn't want it any other way.

Efrain Ramirez is the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand manager for Atlantic Foods Corp. in the South American nation of Colombia. Thanks to the world's brand's investment in his beef education, he began to value every segment of the supply chain, even those he'd had no previous opportunity to know about.

It didn't take long for Ramirez to see that, as his understanding of the brand blossomed, so did sales. Knowledge of the premium beef product and awareness of its place in the Colombian market became a source of confidence that helps him lead a team of CAB specialists at Atlantic.

When Ramirez attended the Specialist Seminar this March in Mobile, Ala., he found an event put on entirely for those in CAB foodservice marketing,

encouraged to share sales strategies and learn from brand experts. A few who attend from around the world are singled out for recognition, those who have gone above and beyond to promote the brand with great results.

Beaming with pride, Ramirez accepted the 2017 Specialist of the Year award.

"Sharing this honor with my team and even our customers in Colombia is an inspiration," he says, thinking back to how far he's come in the profession.

"Before my job was selling premium beef, my knowledge of it was caveman, at best," Ramirez jokes. "I was better at eating beef than identifying cuts and selling the product."

## Culinary Center celebrates five years

February 2017 marked the five-year anniversary of the *Certified Angus Beef* brand's Culinary Center (formerly the Education & Culinary Center), designed for focused work on adding value to Angus cattle.

Since its beginning, the Culinary Center has welcomed thousands of guests, among them chefs, retailers, ranchers and media



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

## Meanwhile at the Culinary Center

Since its establishment in February 2012, the CAB Culinary Center 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 350 groups have visited the Wooster, Ohio, venue from all parts of the world. This column within Brand News helps keep producers current on recent events there.

- ▶ Cermak, March 7-8
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- ▶ RD Drage culinary students, March 13
- ▶ Sysco Sacramento, March 14-15
- ▶ Meade County, Kentucky Cattlemen, March 14
- ▶ Independent Retailer Summit, March 15-17
- ▶ Masters of Brand Advantages 12.3, March 20-24
- ▶ Palmer Foods, March 20
- ▶ Chef Summit, March 25-29
- ▶ Exporter Alliance, March 29-31
- ▶ Buehler's and Golden West, March 31

personalities, to expand their knowledge of CAB and help solidify their role in its mission.

CAB Director of Education Deanna Walenciak says the increasing requests from partners to visit the facility was first driven by word of mouth. That trend continues, but the center will also be represented with a new web page at [www.CertifiedAngusBeef.com/Culinary-Center](http://www.CertifiedAngusBeef.com/Culinary-Center), and an emphasis on social media interaction.

"We've seen an extreme amount of excitement and enthusiasm and the demand is there for our customers to come to the center," Walenciak says. "People want to be here. They are talking about it."

By providing a home base adjacent to the CAB offices, guests are able to get creative, innovate and dig deeper into conversations about beef, Walenciak says. The bar of excellence is continually being raised.

"I don't think we fully understood the potential of the Culinary Center when we

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## 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 ...](http://www...)) for each video is also provided for our print edition readers. Visit [www.cabpartners.com](http://www.cabpartners.com) or [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org) for more information.



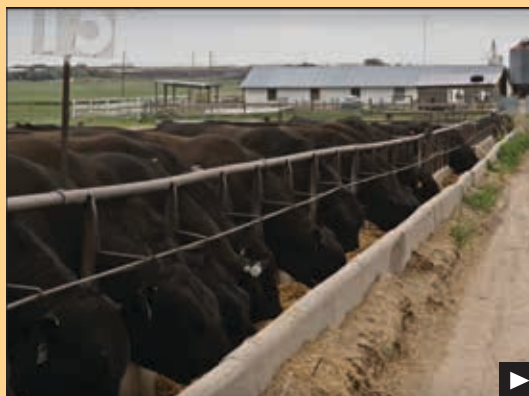
Paul Dykstra, beef cattle specialist for the *Certified Angus Beef*® brand, recaps 2016 grading trends and market signals. Here's the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MiL5MOACSQ>.



Sustainability is about continuous improvement, says Cameron Bruett, head of corporate affairs for JBS USA. He discusses just what sustainability is and isn't. Here's the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WG4Phko6fQ>.



Dave Nichols of Nichols Farms at Bridgewater, Iowa, talks about ways commercial producers can add value to their herd and then capture that through marketing. Here's the clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-OFyrCvP9I>.



Braden Schaal, owner and manager of Schaal Cattle Co. talks about the selection and breeding technology that have improved beef quality in his commercial Angus herd. Here's the clip: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDAvi\\_PYWkS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDAvi_PYWkS).



opened it,” CAB Senior Vice President Brent Eichar says. “We envisioned it as a gathering place and educational destination for the businesses we work with as a brand — but the culinary exploration, especially with a lot of these cuts that are seldom utilized, has really helped change the way people think about cooking beef and its uses.”

A visit to the new web page will explain more. Looking ahead, the center will be a must for all of those heading to the 2018 National Angus Convention in Ohio as the brand celebrates 40 years that fall.

### A pastry or two

As livestock require the daily attention of their keepers, yeast does the same.

Under the careful hand of CAB Pastry Chef Julie Sexten, five bread starters grow and produce for weekly visitors to the CAB brand in Wooster, Ohio. The crop — a variety for artisan breads — accompany all of the Culinary Center’s meals. She even makes all hamburger buns from scratch, but not before she bakes an assortment of goods for breakfast.

So what’s a pastry chef to do at the world’s largest beef brand?

Deliver quality like the rest of the company.

“There’s just a vision that everything should be top notch,” Sexten says. “There’s no reason to have the best beef out there and have anything else be secondary. Everything should rise up to that same level.”

Sexten, an animal science grad with a master’s degree in economics, decided decades ago that she enjoyed working with her hands, bringing art to the table. She was operating a successful culinary business in Missouri when husband Justin took a job as CAB director of supply development and, with their three girls, they relocated to Ohio.

Julie began helping at the Culinary Center in the front of the house until she noticed a need and offered to help the chefs.

“I’d just say, ‘Hey, do you want me to make something for that,’ and they’d ask me to do something, and they just started asking me to do more and more things. At the same time the meats lab was being added on and there was space in the kitchen.”

Meat is still the focus, but oftentimes Sexten is asked to share dough recipes with visiting chefs or make special requests for those in house.

“With pastry, some things take two to three days to do, so if we’re doing hamburger buns on Friday, I’ll start those on Wednesday.



► Julie Sexten, an animal science grad with a master’s degree in economics, decided decades ago that she enjoyed working with her hands, bringing art to the table. She was operating a successful culinary business in Missouri when husband Justin took a job as CAB director of supply development and, with their three girls, they relocated



I’ll begin the rolls for lunch tomorrow today; then I’ll feed my starter because next week we have a group coming in that we will serve bread to each afternoon.”

It also helps that the hands preparing the food understand the rancher world. Sexten studied one world but lives in the other, and that provides unique perspective to those visiting the center.

“I think this job has really pushed me to experiment and change things, and that’s what the Culinary Center does. They generate new ideas and come up with things to call their own. Everyone benefits.”

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**Editor’s Note:** Laura Conaway is producer communications specialist for CAB.