



# Consumer Focus

► by Kindra Gordon, field editor

## Fast and delicious

*Cattlemen's College® session features new beef cuts, preparation methods catering to consumer desire for convenience.*

### Cooking attitudes

What do you think of when you think about cooking beef? That was the question Steve Wald posed to Cattlemen's College attendees during a session highlighting the industry's work in developing new beef products and preparation methods.

Wald, who is executive director of beef innovations for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), acknowledged that the grill is likely first to come to mind when consumers think about preparing beef. In an effort to add convenience for consumers, the beef industry is turning its attention to microwaveable beef products.

One such example is a microwaveable pot roast that can be on the table within 30 minutes.

Bridget Wasser, senior director of meat science technology with NCBA, explained that this microwaveable roast is the result of continuing work from the beef-checkoff-funded muscle-profiling study conducted by the industry in conjunction with several universities in the late 1990s.

### Identifying opportunities

Wasser explained, "That study helped identify the most tender parts of muscles; it identified 'diamonds in the rough' for further application as value-added cuts."

Wasser shared that the petite tender, ranch steak and flat iron are three examples of newer cuts that have evolved from the muscle-profiling study. They have been introduced to the marketplace during the past decade and are now seeing huge success.

For instance, Wasser reported, in 2011, 63 million pounds (lb.) of flat-iron steaks were sold, making it one of the top five steaks now sold. By comparison, porterhouse and T-bone steaks combined sold 69 million lb. in 2011.

Steaks aren't the only new cuts being developed. The microwaveable pot roast is a cut being called the "culotte" from the *biceps femoris* muscle, also called the sirloin cap. Wasser said the culotte ranges from 2 lb. to 3 lb., and, with special packaging and seasoning, has worked very well as a microwaveable product.

"Consumers need help. They do not feel comfortable selecting or preparing beef," Wald added, explaining the development



PHOTO BY KINDRA GORDON

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of the microwaveable item. Consumers do not want to spend more than 30 minutes preparing a meal.

Wald said NCBA's beef product-development goals are to make fixing a beef dinner at home better than going out — and to offer products that are fresh and fast.

To that end, a microwaveable ground beef product in a special bag that will drain any grease away from the product has also been developed.

Both the microwaveable roast and ground beef in their special packaging are FDA-approved and being put into test markets this spring.

### Quick-cooking beef options

Additionally, working with Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB), NCBA has brought beef skillet and sandwich meal kits to the marketplace this winter. As an example, the skillet meals are offered as beef strip, beef cube and cube steak and come with three different recipes on the bag. The products can quickly be prepared into meal options such as beef stew or beef stroganoff.

Wald acknowledged that the beef product development process is "long," but concluded, "We're making progress."

For more information about beef product development visit [www.beefinnovationsgroup.com](http://www.beefinnovationsgroup.com) or [www.beefretail.org](http://www.beefretail.org).

## NUBeef-Anatomy app educates across professions

NUBeef-Anatomy allows users to navigate through the anatomy of beef cattle and learn more about bones and muscles found in the carcass. The app functions as a digital beef-anatomy textbook, said Steven Jones, professor of animal science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), who developed the media with EdMedia's instructional multimedia designer Vishal Singh.

"It is helpful for students to understand where each muscle is located in the beef carcass, its composition and eating quality," Jones said.

The information offered in the app could be used by animal science and veterinary students, 4-H and FFA members, meat processors, chefs, consumers and others.

As a user views each cross-section, they can view a picture of a selected muscle and learn about the anatomical and physical features of each muscle.

Anatomical information for each muscle includes action, origin, insertion, blood supply and innervation. Meat-related information about the muscle includes composition and the eating qualities of tenderness, aroma, flavor and juiciness.

"This makes the app relevant to chefs and consumers as they determine proper methods of preparation," Jones said.

The NUBeef-Anatomy app is available in the Apple iTunes app store for iPhone and iPad for \$4.99. For more information visit <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nubeef-anatomy/id597656234?mt=8> or visit the IANR website at <http://ianrhome.unl.edu/mobileapps/beefanatomy>.

— Adapted from a release by University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension.