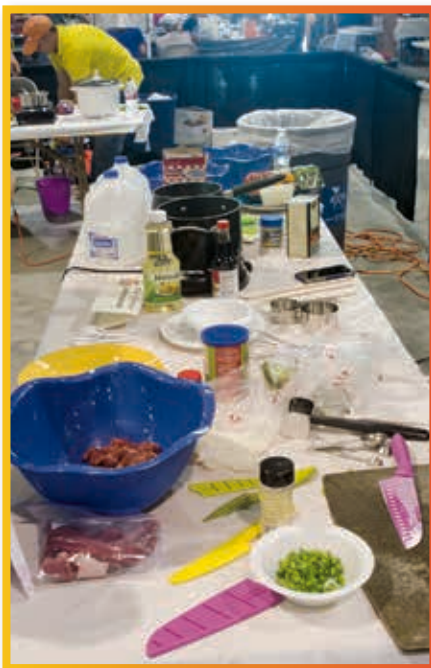




# Iron Chef, Angus Style

Juniors and adults alike can get in on the fun of Cook-Off festivities.

Story & photos by **Kasey Brown**, associate editor



The combination of food, skits, costumes and enthusiasm makes the Auxiliary-sponsored All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Cook-Off a fun event for both participants and spectators. While adults are involved behind the scenes during the Cook-Off, the Chef's Challenge was designed to include adults as participants.

The Chef's Challenge was introduced in 2010 and is open to senior National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members (ages 18-21) and adults, explains Anne Patton Schubert, Taylorsville, Ky., co-chair of the Cook-Off.

Much like the popular television show *Iron Chef* with its famed secret-ingredient

challenges, Patton Schubert explains the contest includes preparing and serving a specially designated, grill-suitable cut of CAB and specific ingredients announced one day prior to the contest.

Unlike the Cook-Off, no skit or advance recipe is necessary, though recipes are gathered after the event. One or two people may enter each age division. Knowledge of the CAB brand and a flair for preparing, plating and serving the dish to a three-judge panel is required for success, recommends Patton Schubert.

"We aren't searching for nutritional or carcass experts, but for people who have a knowledge of the CAB program and its value, and have an interest in sharing that," she adds.

## A tasty challenge

Anne Lampe, Scott City, Kan., co-chair of the Cook-off, explains that each team gets an hour to prepare their dish, and completes all

► **Above:** Melanie Kiani (left) and Emma Collins prepare their PB&J Flank Steak and Okra Fritters.

► **Left:** Contestants bring in cooking supplies and supplemental ingredients so preparation is done at their table.



► Ron Hinrichsen (left) and Terry Houser unpack their contest-supplied secret ingredients and used the communal grill to prepare their pizza.

of their preparation in the designated contest area. Upon learning the secret ingredients, the contestants get 24 hours to develop a recipe and buy supplemental ingredients.

With seven entries in the 2015 contest, Lampe explains that each team would receive their contest-provided ingredients and get to start in 10-minute intervals. The designated CAB cut was flank steak and this year's secret ingredients were okra, jalapeños and a regional item, Sandhill plum jelly.

Lampe notes that the contest scorecard was developed with Chef Michael Ollier

of Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) back in 2010. While technique and preparation, plating, originality, and use of CAB and secret ingredients are all components of the scorecard, taste is the biggest slice. Above all, recipes must taste good to succeed.

Having been a contestant and now a judge for the Chef's Challenge, Kathy Wilson, Orleans, Ind., says, "This contest forces you to think outside the box."

The competition has a very fluid feel, due to exceptional planning by the co-chairs. The judges are encouraged to ask each team

their plans for their recipe before the teams start preparation. Each team is stationed at a table, and judges wander the contest area to observe cooking methods and to ask questions.

Participants may go to the kitchen to wash vegetables and can go outside to the grill, but otherwise are instructed to stay at their tables. Food-safety considerations, preparation skill and CAB knowledge are all noted during the prep time. Unlike the Cook-Off, where tables are decorated

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► Joseph Adams prepares his Sandhill Plum Teriyaki Beef.

## NJAA Division Chef's Challenge Winner 2015

### Sandhill Plum Teriyaki Beef

1 lb. CAB® flank steak (cut into small, thin pieces)

#### Steak marinade:

2 Tbs. soy sauce  
garlic powder

Marinate beef in soy sauce sprinkled with garlic powder while chopping vegetables.

1 small jalapeño, chopped finely	½ cup red bell pepper, chopped
½ cup onion, chopped	½ cup yellow bell pepper, chopped
½ cup green bell pepper, chopped	1 cup fresh okra, cut diagonal

#### Sandhill plum teriyaki sauce:

¼ cup soy sauce	5 Tbs. packed brown sugar
¼ tsp. garlic powder	1 cup water
½ tsp. ground ginger	2 Tbs. cornstarch mixed with ½ cup water
3 Tbs. Sandhill plum jelly	

Heat 2 tablespoons canola oil on medium-high heat and add onion and beef. Brown on each side 1-2 minutes; set aside. Add an additional 1 tablespoon of oil to the skillet and add jalapeño, bell pepper and okra. Cook 2-3 minutes; set aside. In a separate boiler, combine sauce ingredients on medium high heat.

As the mixture begins to boil, add the cornstarch/water mixture to thicken. Simmer 2-3 minutes stirring continuously. Combine vegetables and beef. Pour in teriyaki mixture and heat 3-4 minutes until sauce is desired thickness. Serve over white rice.



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to correlate to the skit's theme, table presentation doesn't matter. For the Chef's Challenge, plating is the key presentation considered.

Judges Wilson; Glen Grote, Mason, Texas; and Kasey Brown, Saint Joseph, Mo., marveled at the variety of recipes used without any repeats. Recipes included an Asian flank-steak stir-fry; flank steak on Cajun rice with stuffed bacon-wrapped okra poppers; PB&J flank steak with okra fritters; quinoa-stuffed flank steak with chickpea and okra salad; flank-steak fajitas; grilled pizza; and flank steak with fried stuffed okra.

Grote says he was surprised how well the jalapeños' heat was balanced in all of the recipes, and the savory flavors mixed well with the sweet Sandhill plum jelly.

Where Cook-Off competitors must incorporate the 10 specifications into their skit, Chef's Challenge participants instead were asked how to present CAB in a positive light during a grocery-store interaction.

Both Patton Schubert and Lampe encourage more NJAA members to participate in this unique competition. The Chef's Challenge is a great opportunity for juniors who might be too shy for the skit aspect of the Cook-Off but still enjoy cooking. However, NJAA members cannot participate in both the Chef's Challenge and the Cook-Off.

Winners of each division (NJAA and adult) receive a CAB logo jacket and a \$100 cash prize. Second- and third-place entries receive an award.



► **Timothy Clark** (left), Gretna Va., and **Jacob McCall**, Greenville, Va., placed first in the adult division of the Chef's Challenge.



► **Ron Hinrichsen** (left), Westmoreland, Kan., and **Terry Houser**, Leonardville, Kan., placed second in the adult division of the Chef's Challenge.



► **Melanie Kiani** (left) and **Emma Collins**, both of Morton, Miss., placed third in the adult division of the Chef's Challenge.



► **Joseph Adams** (left), Union Springs, Ala., placed first in the youth division of the Chef's Challenge.

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**Staying involved**

Kathy Wilson, Orleans, Ind., and Glen Grote, Mason, Texas, both have long histories with the All-American *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) Cook-Off. Both have coached their respective state junior Angus associations to participate.

Grote says, "Kids could 'be somebody' even if they couldn't show, so they would come to NJAS (National Junior Angus Show) to participate in contests and the Cook-Off. It was a great way to get lots of kids involved."

Wilson says 1998 was the first year her family was involved in the Cook-Off because the NJAS was in Indianapolis. Another Indiana girl had asked her oldest daughter to join a Cook-Off team.

They were like deer in headlights, she recalls. "The skit and recipe were a disaster, but we were like sponges that year. We just absorbed as much as we could."

That year served as a spark, and she says her kids got very excited for it the following year.

"We got bit by the Cook-Off bug," she notes.

They spent more time planning and preparing for it. They would watch television shows and listen to the radio with Cook-Off skit ideas in the backs of their brains. They would try different recipes throughout the year to pick the best one for the contest.

"We would eat, breathe, sleep for the Cook-Off," she adds.

The hard work paid off. Wilson says she has many Black Kettle Awards (the highest award for the Cook-Off) sitting in her house from her three daughters' involvement in the contest.

The first Chef's Challenge was shortly after Wilson's oldest daughter had aged out of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA). She was excited that she could still participate in a contest. Wilson was coaching a Cook-Off team that year, but the next year she joined her daughter as a participant and had a blast.

As of 2015, Wilson has now been a Cook-Off coach, participant and judge. No matter one's age, there is always a way to stay involved.