

# Taking Science to the Table

The beef industry must make the most out of each animal, presenting lower-priced products to maintain strong demand.

by Crystal Meier

Chefs look for new ideas to bring profitable beef cuts to their menus. Usually that means they have to choose price over quality, but not with the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand. Today, they're seeing firsthand how some CAB cuts from the chuck and round can create tasteful and profitable menu solutions.

Increased sales of these cuts mean more pounds of CAB-brand products sold per head and more value for high-quality Angus cattle. That's why two chefs and a meat scientist have joined forces to reach distributor specialists and other chefs with a new approach.

"For nearly a decade, the beef industry has been touting the profitability of cuts like shoulder tender, center knuckle and flat iron," says Mark Gwin, research and development manager for the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) Value-Added Products Division. "We know there are differences in beef muscles, but many chefs are still trying to grasp this concept. They need to see it for themselves and understand



► Chefs Dianna Stoffer (right) and Beriau combined their skills to create beef recipes that help chefs profit from using premium-quality CAB chuck and round cuts.

the CAB brand offers an even greater quality value for end meats, due to superior, consistent marbling."

Gwin teamed up with Mickey Beriau, executive chef at the White Cliffs Country Club in Plymouth, Mass., and Dianna Stoffer, CAB corporate chef, to explain the science and demonstrate recipes for profitable end-meat cuts. They appeared together onstage at a seminar for licensed CAB distributors in January. Since then, their preparation tips and recipes have been shared with chefs throughout the United States and beyond.

## Inspiring with ideas

"With chefs, all they need are ideas," Beriau says. "If you sell the idea, you sell the beef."

From his own restaurant kitchen, Beriau offers shoulder tender steak as the "bistro tender." He sells more than 80 of them in a four-day week, giving him a \$7-per-pound (lb.) cost savings over an alternative such as tenderloin medallions. His recipe for Bistro Tender Medallions with Alaskan Crab Cakes, Tarragon Emulsion, and Crab and Asparagus-Filled Mushrooms could easily grace the menu of the world's finest restaurants. Yet, he can grill the same steak and serve it with sauce and fried onions to reach a broader section of the foodservice industry.

As a chef, Beriau is on the forefront of the evolution to serve end meats because he understands these muscles better than most. He worked with the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) on its muscle-profiling project to separate chucks and rounds into individual muscles and prepare them according to their quality potentials.

"Just as cattle can only perform to their genetic potential under the right management, these beef cuts are best when separated and prepared using the appropriate cooking method," Gwin says. "Decades ago, we sliced the chuck for mom's



► Chef Mickey Beriau uses beef from the chuck shoulder to make these Bistro Tender Medallions with Alaskan Crab Cakes. "It's all about presentation, that first impression," he says. "When you serve food like this, it really shows someone cares."



► Beriau puts the finishing touches on a dish that helps restaurants profit from end meats and producers realize greater returns through higher carcass utilization.

pot roast. Today, we know the chuck flap can be just as juicy and flavorful as the ribeye when grilled."

## Marketing challenges

Distributors, however, rely on the CAB brand and its chef partners to market the

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entire chuck, not just the chuck flap and other cuts that have performance potential.

“They probably will not be able to market the whole knuckle, for example, to one restaurant,” Stoffer says. “We are continually challenged to help them reach more segments of the industry, which keeps their labor costs under control as they identify new opportunities for merchandising specific muscles.”

In May, PFG Quality Foods gathered chefs in Little Rock, Ark., to “experience” the *teres major* and flat iron from the chuck. A trained meat cutter carefully portioned top sirloin steaks, too, explaining their added value and quality attributes for chefs, as Stoffer shared preparation tips and recipes.

“When middle-meat prices are high like they have been, chefs need proven ideas for serving beef at a lower cost without sacrificing quality,” Stoffer explains. “Bringing these underutilized cuts to the table provides tools they need to be competitive.”

These cuts do not take demand away from middle-meat sales. Rather, they expand the potential for serving CAB cuts on the menu, leading to higher carcass utilization, Gwin explains. Merchandising the flat iron, *teres major* and clod heart separately brings nearly twice as much value vs. selling the entire clod as one item. While restaurateurs realize the added value of using these cuts, trained meat cutters at licensed grocery stores also help carve more value for producers. It all helps to grow the \$50 million a year in grid premiums paid to producers.

“A few years ago, distributors said the flat iron took too much labor and yield loss to cut,” Gwin says. “Now, most offer it. The next level of opportunity comes at the packing level. Packers are starting to market some muscles, like the *teres major* and flat iron, but it takes time.”

