

What's Cooking at CAB

With Chef Michael Ollier

Picture perfect beef

The table is set perfectly — every utensil in place, the napkins folded neatly, wine glasses filled and a candle glowing softly. A beautifully cooked bone-in strip steak rests at the center of the plate — its rightful place — surrounded by a colorful display of greens. Every morsel of food on the fine china has been perfectly arranged.

Sadly, this will not likely be the table I set for my wife this Valentine's Day. Instead, it's a scene plucked from the basement of our Wooster, Ohio, office on a regular basis. Even sadder, this picture-perfect plate will not likely even be savored for its taste. It was created for visual enjoyment.

After two hours of creating the incredible dish, we'll spend another 30 minutes adjusting lighting, camera angles and food placement to capture the photo that will capture your taste buds.

I spent several weeks this winter in the kitchen working with a professional "food stylist" and our staff photographer to build our arsenal of food photography. It's a part of my job and our company that most people don't think about.

But consider this: We have a database of more than 300 recipes on our website, and most of them are accompanied by photos of the prepared dish. The CAB marketing team provides more than 12,300 licensed

restaurants and grocery stores with promotional materials, recipe cards, advertisements, billboards, menus and more that feature our photographs every day.

We spend hours in the kitchen and photo studio getting one perfect image that will create more demand for your brand. As I flip through the pages of the *Angus Journal* each month, I can tell that you probably spend the same amount of time obsessing over getting the perfect picture for your next bull advertisement.

You see, people eat with their eyes. Just like cattlemen might look into performance records on a bull before they buy it, but you have to hook them visually before they start asking questions. I've cooked enough *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand steaks in my day to know people are going to love our product. But we have to sell it to them first, and the best way to do that is to appeal to their visual senses.

We have to make a steak look so enticing that consumers run to their meatcase and ask for our beef, hoping what they cook will turn out looking just as exquisite as the photo in the ad. The same is true in a restaurant — we have to sell the product to a chef who has to sell it to his customer, and it all starts with being able to showcase this beef at its best.

One of the fun photo shoots we did this

winter was for a new recipe we're featuring for Valentine's Day. Don't stress over making this steak so picture-perfect it's too pretty to eat, but I think your spouse will appreciate the effort of trying. Enjoy!

That's what's cookin' at CAB.

Until next time,
— Chef Michael



Steak Au Poivre for Two

Ingredients

- 1 (16-oz.) CAB® brand strip steak
- 2 Tbs. whole peppercorn blend (black, white, red, green)
- 1 Tbs. kosher salt
- 1 Tbs. vegetable oil
- 3 Tbs. butter (dice 2 Tbs. into small cubes and keep refrigerated)
- 1 Tbs. minced shallot
- ¼ cup brandy
- ¼ cup beef stock
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp. sour cream

Instructions:

1. Crack peppercorns with the back of a skillet. Cut strip steak in half. Press cracked pepper firmly into both sides of each steak. Season with salt.
2. Heat oil and 1 Tbs. butter in medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. When butter foams, place steaks in pan, pressing firmly. Lower heat to medium and sear about 5 minutes on each side. Transfer steaks to a clean plate and tent with foil to keep warm.
3. Add shallots to the pan and, holding the pan away from heat, add brandy. Return pan to medium-high heat. Expect a flame while the alcohol burns off. Cook a minute until brandy thickens. Add stock, bring sauce back to a boil and reduce until thickened to a sauce consistency.
4. Whisk in Dijon, sour cream and cold butter. Taste sauce and add salt to taste; remove from heat. Spoon sauce on plates and place steaks on top.



► Chef Michael Ollier preps a dish for a photo shoot.