

What's Cooking at CAB

With Chef Michael Ollier

It's spring cleaning time here at the Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) office, and that means business. This isn't a "wipe down the counters and sweep the floor" kind of cleaning.

We have a professional-scale kitchen in the basement of our office, and it deserves five-star restaurant treatment. This month, Chef Scott and I will give our humble kitchen home a real polishing — power wash the walls, pull down ceiling tiles for proper scrubbing, disassemble the ovens for detail work and absolutely empty and reorganize the pantry, fridge and freezer.

I'll admit it's not my favorite task of the year. In fact, it's one of my least favorite tasks of the year. I'd liken it to cleaning and organizing your ranch shop or tool shed: not fun, but a necessary evil. I know that a clean, tidy kitchen makes for a peaceful, orderly workspace.

This also reminds me of how important it is to be organized in the kitchen throughout the year. In the rare occasion that we pull a freezer-burned package of mystery meat out of the industrial freezer this time of year, I'm reminded of the food safety and quality issues associated with proper storage.

It might not be fun, but I recommend you conduct a similar spring cleaning in your home fridge and freezer. Here are a few tips I keep in mind when we're conducting the grand scrub-down:

► **Start with organization:** Before even putting an item in the freezer, make sure it's

labeled (no mystery meat here, please) and dated. Even with paper-wrapped items straight from the butcher, take a couple of minutes to jot the month and year on each of the packages before tossing it into the freezer.

- **When in doubt, toss it out:** If you have items properly labeled, there shouldn't be much doubt. Toss anything that has been in the freezer for more than a year; 6-9 months if it's paper-wrapped. Items that are professionally vacuum-sealed can last longer, but don't push your luck.
- **It's a waste of taste:** If you have a lot of items that have been sitting in there for more than a year, you might think it's wasteful to toss; if it's frozen, it's good forever, right? Wrong. Scraping off that hunk of freezer-burned crystals doesn't help. That freezer burn is the result of the excess loss of moisture on the meat surface and is going to result in a dry, tasteless product.

► **Spoilage stinks:** Freezing exponentially slows down the growth of bacteria, but it doesn't completely stop it. Even meat that is frozen can spoil over time, and that stinks. Literally. Then it will stink up your whole freezer. Then the rest of your frozen goods start to smell like spoiled meat. We know smell is a huge factor in taste, so then you have a whole freezer full of meat, ice cream and frozen veggies that taste like a freezer. Trust me; it's better to just toss it out. Treat your favorite cow dog to a feast and keep an eye on those freezer dates.

► **Rules of the fridge:** In any professional kitchen, there are designated areas in the fridge for produce, raw meat, dairy, etc. I know most home refrigerators don't have that space luxury, but one thing to always stick to is store raw meat in the bottom drawers — anything else could lead to serious cross-contamination if the raw meat drips down. Toss any raw meat that's been in there more than three days. Again, the cow dog, barn cats and your taste buds will thank you.

While conducting your spring cleaning, you might find a few beef packages that say, "use me or lose me." If that's the case, here's a great recipe to use up leftover steak in the fridge or a cooked product you popped back



Grilled Pizza with Steak and Blue Cheese

Ingredients:

8 (4-oz.) CAB® top sirloin steaks
1 (13.8-oz.) tube pizza dough
2 Tbs. olive oil
1 cup prepared tomato basil sauce
8 oz. crumbled blue cheese
16 oz. shredded mozzarella cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Preheat grill on high and reduce to medium when hot. Season steaks with salt and pepper; grill to desired doneness. Move steaks to cutting board and rest for 5 minutes. (If you're using leftovers, simply pull out of the fridge and let it come up to room temperature).
2. Unroll and cut pizza dough into four equal pieces. Roll each piece to 1 1/2 times the original size and cut each piece in half. Brush with olive oil and grill about 2 minutes per side. Turn off flame to half the grill. (If using a charcoal grill, push coals to one side.) Place grilled dough on the cooler side.
3. Thinly slice steaks. Top each dough piece with tomato sauce, steak, blue cheese and mozzarella cheese. Shut grill lid 3 to 4 minutes for cheese to melt; serve.

Makes 8 pieces

in the freezer. This easy pizza pie is perfect to kick off grilling season, and you can use about any cut to top it with.

That's what's cookin' (and cleanin') at CAB. Until next time,

— Chef Michael

