

Range Beef Cow Symposium XX

Dec. 11-13, 2007 • Larimer County Fairgrounds and Events Complex, Fort Collins, Colo.

Selling Beef Successfully in the Restaurant

by Troy Smith

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (Dec. 12, 2007) — John Pickerel probably has stronger ties to the livestock business than most restaurant owners. His father was a professional bull rider who later had several livestock-related businesses, including running a stockyard and orderbuying. Pickerel jokingly told Tuesday's Range Beef Cow Symposium XX crowd that his dad always had a bull rider's business philosophy: "Try to get rich in eight seconds."

Hosted by the cooperative extension services and animal science departments of Colorado State University, South Dakota State University, the University of Wyoming and the University of Nebraska, the symposium is at the Larimer County Fairgrounds and Events Complex, Fort Collins, Colo., Dec. 11-13.

Pickerel lives by a different credo in running Buckhorn Steakhouse and Roadhouse. In all, Pickerel operates 10 restaurants located in the San Francisco Bay

area. He has devoted years to "doing meat right," and promoting Buckhorn's signature high-quality beef. He caters to the beef lover in every potential customer.

"If we do our job right, we can convert die-hard vegetarians, stubborn children and skeptical Texans. They will talk about the experience and return for more," Pickerel stated.

The Buckhorn menu has expanded, but Pickerel started his first restaurant with "beef on a bun" and just a little au jus. The business grew by always offering a reliable product — premium Choice beef, wet-aged, carefully seasoned and cooked medium rare "edge to edge."

"We're fanatical about it," Pickerel said. "We take quality very seriously and promote the flavor of red and pink beef. We're aggressive about explaining to the customer why they should and will enjoy it."

Why premium Choice beef? Pickerel says he wanted restaurant reviews to tell

more about his fare than the portions were ample. He followed the example of other successful, high-end restaurants that served the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand and attracted line-up business.

Pickerel employs his own meat cutter, to cut beef to customer specifications. Servers must be "certified" after completing Buckhorn's own "Cow School," which trains employees with regard to differences in meat cuts, as well as the differences in beef quality, aging, marination and preparation methods. The restaurants also promote their fare through sampling, offering customers a taste of new entrées to pique their appetites.

Annually, Buckhorn restaurants serve 500,000 pounds of CAB brand beef to more than 100,000 patrons.

Additional coverage of Range Beef Cow Symposium XX is available at www.rangebeefcow.com.

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