

A Chef's Perspective

Three chefs from across the U.S. dish about Certified Hereford Beef®.

by Sara Gugelmeyer

We all have our own reasons for choosing Hereford cattle and eating Hereford beef, but those who prepare food for customers on a daily basis have a whole different perspective. Chefs are discovering the difference it makes when Certified Hereford Beef® (CHB) is “what’s for dinner” in their restaurants.

Paul Lynch is not a newcomer to the culinary arts. He graduated from New England Culinary Institute and has worked at restaurants in London, England, Texas, Hawaii and the Caribbean. Lynch has been the executive chef at FireLake Grill House and Cocktail Bar, Minneapolis, for more than eight years. So, when Lynch says Certified Hereford Beef has a richer, meatier and all-around better flavor than other meats, he likely knows what he’s talking about.

Why CHB?

Lynch discovered Certified Hereford Beef when he first developed the menu for the FireLake restaurant. “The main thing that led me to it was that I was specifically looking at our signature items,” Lynch says, one of which is prime rib. “The No. 1 complaint in prime rib is the big fat eye in the center of it,” he says.

However, Hereford beef is different, Lynch explains. “Genetically, Hereford has a very small, nearly non-existent, fat eye in the center of the prime rib. So that’s what drew me to Hereford.”

Keith Hicks discovered Certified Hereford Beef differently. He is the chef at Ovation Restaurant, Ft. Worth, Texas. He has been with Ovation for more than a year but has been a chef for five years. Hicks has been using Certified Hereford Beef for only about six months but is very pleased with the results.

Hicks says he discovered Hereford beef through what he calls “steak wars.” He says he often had people coming into the restaurant promoting their

beef. So he started comparing meats with a simple test. “I grill them both to about mid-rare, then to mid-well and examine the texture and how they chew.”

He was impressed with the Certified Hereford Beef steaks right away. “It actually tastes like beef, like you just pulled it off the range,” Hicks says. “I’ve tried Angus and I’ve known people that have used Angus for a long time, but it’s just used up. I wasn’t ever impressed with the Angus program, but I think the Hereford program is fool-proof.”

Kevin Di Libero also followed his personal preference when choosing Certified Hereford Beef. He is executive chef at 22 Bowen’s Wine Bar and Grille, Newport Harbor, R.I., which he describes as a “classical steakhouse, offering the finest cuts of beef.” Di Libero followed his palate when choosing to serve Certified Hereford Beef in his restaurant, and his palate is certainly experienced. He started his career at the Florida Culinary Institute and then in 1998 headed north to Rhode Island, where he has since worked. After having worked as sous chef at 22 Bowen’s in 2001, he returned in February 2007, when the executive chef position became available.

Shortly after he started at 22 Bowen’s, Di Libero began serving Certified Hereford Beef steaks — 8 oz. and 12-oz. fillets. In fact, all of the restaurants in the Newport Harbor Corporation, which owns 22 Bowen’s, serve Certified Hereford Beef. He says that when he matched up Hereford beef with Sterling Silver and other tenderloins, he preferred the Hereford product. He says the consistency in Certified Hereford Beef is also important to him.

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— Chef Paul Lynch,
FireLake Grill and Cocktail Bar

“We are getting the same cattle with the same feed. Whether it be today or next year, it is the same consistent meat,” Di Libero says. “So it creates a consistency in flavor for our customers.”

Preparing CHB

Despite the three chefs’ opinions of the meat, many would say the key to a good piece of any kind of meat is how it’s prepared. FireLake has a unique way of doing just that.

Lynch says he and his team cook prime rib like no one else does. “We rotisserie spit roast it for four hours over smoldering hickory wood the way prime rib was originally cooked,” Lynch says. “It’s a cooking method designed to give it the best flavor, not necessarily the best yield. With Hereford beef, it makes it easy

because the product is so great by itself, coupled with our cooking techniques makes it a natural winning combination,” Lynch says.

Because of this combination, FireLake has garnered a nation-wide reputation. Lynch says, “We are recognized and are famous for our prime rib because we have chosen Certified Hereford Beef.” The restaurant is also known for its hamburgers. He explains that a poll on *citysearch.com* ranked FireLake No. 2 in the twin cities for its hamburgers made of Certified Hereford Beef ground chuck.

Ovation Restaurant has also seen success from its Hereford products. Hicks explains that Texas is the place for beef, and to be able to put out a quality steak in cow town is impressive. “I have a lot of people that say our steak is the best they’ve ever had,” Hicks says. “Putting myself up against some of the other big steakhouses in town, that is quite the compliment.”

It may be across the country from cow town, but 22 Bowen’s



One of Ovation Restaurant’s most popular dishes is a pepper-crusted Certified Hereford Beef fillet, which is pan seared, then topped with jumbo crab meat, shrimp and shitake mushrooms.



also boasts a good steak. Chef Di Libero says he believes the steak should speak for itself, so he goes easy on the seasoning when preparing premium Hereford fillets. “We season our steaks with a nice kosher salt and finish with an organic sea salt,” Di Libero explains. “In my eyes, when you season a steak, it shouldn’t need much more than that. You don’t want to lose what the beef naturally has to offer.”

After adding the seasoning, the chefs prefer to broil their steaks at 22 Bowen’s. They place them in a broiler, which heats up to 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit. Di Libero says that that method leaves a “nice caramelization and char from the salt, giving you that nice, classical steak.” He explains that no one can get that heat from above on a traditional grill.

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FireLake Steak Marinade

Paul Lynch

| | |
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| 4 lb. Certified Hereford Steak, Flank, Hanger, Sirloin, etc. | ½ each onion, sliced |
| 1 cup red wine | 1 Tbsp. dry mustard |
| 1½ cups V-8® vegetable juice | 2 sprigs fresh thyme |
| ½ cup soy sauce | 2 sprigs fresh marjoram |
| 4 cloves garlic, crushed | cracked black pepper |

Mix other ingredients. Marinade steak for 24 to 8 hours. Depending on cut used. Portion steaks, rub with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Grill to order

Servings: 10

Lunch Entree

Per Serving (excluding unknown items): 39 calories; trace fat (7.5% Calories from fat); 1g protein; 4g carbohydrate; 1g dietary fiber; 0mg cholesterol; 972mg sodium. Exchanges: 0 grain (starch); 0 lean meat; 1 vegetable; 0 fat.

The customers seem to appreciate the difference Hereford beef makes as well. Di Libero says when he made the switch after 22 Bowen's had served Sterling Silver for six years, the reaction was good. "Being a steakhouse, we get a lot of steak lovers, so when I made the switch to premium Hereford, the clientele took to it very well," Di Libero says.

Chefs' secrets

These chefs may have state-of-the-art equipment, but they say anyone can fix a quality steak or other Certified Hereford Beef product at home. Lynch says the best way to properly handle any meat is to use a three-part process. First, start with the very best ingredients, then let it shine,

and finally, don't hide it.

He explains, "We buy the very best ingredients. Then we handle it correctly, making sure we apply an appropriate marinade to create a depth of flavor and interest in the meat." Next you should let it shine. Lynch suggests adding a layer of spice to give the meat a dynamic dimension when cooked. Last, don't hide the flavor by over or undercooking. He says it's important to cook it just to the point of perfection. Because of this process, Lynch says when you taste a piece of meat — no matter if it is a burger, steak or prime rib — it is rich and flavorful.

Another tip for cooking steaks at home, Hicks says, is to remember when you remove the steak from the grill, it will continue to cook. "It's important to let them sit. Even if it is still red in the middle, you have to give it time off the grill, because by the time it is served, it has gone from mid-rare to medium," Hicks explains. "It's

best to pull it off just a little bit before the desired temperature."

Di Libero also has a tip for getting restaurant quality steaks off your grill at home. He says it is important to let the grill heat for at least five to 10 minutes before placing the meat on the grill. "You want the grill to get very, very hot because that is what seals in the juices," Di Libero explains. He suggests allowing it to heat to about 500 degrees Fahrenheit, which allows the grates to get hot. He adds, "Everyone has their own taste of seasoning and everything, but the one key to a good steak is a very hot grill."

He urges beefeaters to remember whether you are choosing a meal at a restaurant or buying meat to cook at home, "taste is all in what you buy. You buy good quality ingredients, like premium Hereford beef, and you are going to have a good dinner." **HW**