Beef Industry Fights For Room At The Table

The Wall Street Journal reports the U.S. beef industry is trying to fight recession-related woes by promoting new, cheaper cuts from less popular parts of the steer and pushing beef harder overseas. The industry’s moves mirror those of restaurants, supermarkets and packaged-food companies seeking ways to entice budget-conscious consumers who are dining out less and looking for ways to economize at home. So far, though, beef sales in the U.S. are suffering largely because consumers aren’t eating as much at restaurants. Beef sales to foodservice establishments were down nearly 5% last year, according to figures from food-consulting firm Technomic Inc. Sales to supermarkets and other retail outlets rose 2% as consumers started cooking more at home.

The industry is redoubling its efforts to sell more cuts of meat from a wider variety of the steer’s muscles. Traditionally, consumers have favored the so-called middle meats -- premium cuts from the rib and the loin like rib-eye and T-bone steaks. Middle meats also tend to be more profitable for beef processors. But now as consumers scour delis and supermarkets for deals, the industry is trying to spotlight cheaper muscle cuts like round and chuck that have tended to be less tender and contain more muscle fiber. The industry says new cutting techniques have made the cuts more palatable. The new Denver Cut, a steak from the "chuck roll," near the cow’s ribs, is currently being tested in restaurants. Another cut, Boneless Country-Style Beef Chuck Ribs, is being tested in some grocery stores. (Wall Street Journal, 3/26/09)

Dried plums naturally raise the value of underutilized proteins

Dried plums naturally raise the value of underutilized proteins. Texture, flavor and consumer ingredient acceptance results from dried plums’ unique composition. Labeled as “natural flavors”, the non-characterizing flavor of dried plums helps to improve the savory taste of proteins while rounding out the flavors of herbs and spices. Important for meat processors is the natural water-binding abilities of dried plum ingredients that when used in a vacuum tumbling process can add 12% or more weight much of which is retained throughout the final cooking process. The ability to control purge is also improved. And dried plums’ natural antioxidants help to extend shelf life in fresh and frozen meat formats.
Texas A&M Research

As reported in the June 2008 issue of the *Journal of Food Science*, an international group of researchers (Dept. of Food Technology, University de Oriente, Venezuela; Bryan Independent School District, Bryan, Texas; Dept. of Animal Science, Texas A&M University), with the support of Texas AgriLife Research and The California Dried Plum Board, studied the use of dried plums as a replacement for chemical preservatives in sausage, reporting their work in a paper titled “Antioxidant Properties of Dried Plum Ingredients in Raw and Precooked Pork Sausage”.

“All pork sausage with 3% dried plum puree was as acceptable to consumers as the control or those patties with BHA/BHT. Inclusion of 3% dried plum puree was effective as a natural antioxidant for suppressing lipid oxidation in precooked pork sausage patties”. A copy of this and other technical research can be found in the industrial section of the California Dried Plum Board website [www.californiadriedplums.org](http://www.californiadriedplums.org).

Knowing Dried Plums Face-To-Face At Demonstration Events

The California Dried Plum Board continues to take the message of naturally improving the sensory characteristics and value of animal proteins to the food ingredient market. On May 1 in Austin TX, the Board participated in the Value Cuts Summit, a daylong symposium sponsored by *Meatingplace Magazine*. Three beef value cuts were demonstrated that were treated with dried plum ingredients using a vacuum tumbled marinating process: lifter meat as flat iron steak, lifter meat as flank steak and select-grade New York strip steak with the flavor and texture of choice.

Said one participant commenting on the efficacy of dried plums in these value cuts, “I was very impressed with the tenderness and juiciness of the Splenius you showcased at the Value Cuts Summit in Austin. I would like to be able to deliver this type of improved performance in the Gracilis and Pectineus.” The Board will repeat this demonstration at the September 16 Value Cuts Summit to be held in Chicago.

In June (June 7-9) the Board will be once again demonstrating the ability of dried plums to naturally raise the value of underutilized meat cuts at the annual Institute of Food Technologists conference in Anaheim, CA (Booth #1459).

A Dried And Fresh Plum Ingredient For Every Meat Application

California dried plums are available for virtually every meat application. Dried plum powders, purees, pastes, juice concentrates, bits and pieces and of course whole fruit can be incorporated into most meat products. Fresh plum juice concentrate and prune fiber powder are two recent additions to the library of ingredients for meat use.

Plum Good News is published by the California Dried Plum Board. Further information on the use of dried and fresh plums can be found at [www.californiadriedplums.org](http://www.californiadriedplums.org) and 800-729-5992