



Hereford Dons a Black Hat

Denver-area steak house Black Hat Cattle Co. proudly serves CHB®.



Black Hat Cattle Co. combines rustic elegance, superior customer service and great-tasting CHB.



PHOTOS BY LEN BREWER



by Sara Gugelmeyer

It is rustic western elegance mingled with superior hospitality and, most importantly, great tasting beef. Black Hat Cattle Co. is more than your average white tablecloth steak house. Nestled outside the Denver metro area in Evergreen, Colo., the steak house, owned by David Rodriguez, proudly serves Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) for all of its beef entrées. And Rodriguez knows great beef.

Although Black Hat Cattle Co. has only been in business for about five years, Rodriguez owned another steak house in Evergreen for 21 years. "I wanted to continue in the restaurant business," Rodriguez says of opening the Black Hat restaurant.

When opening Black Hat Cattle Co., Rodriguez hired chef Antonio Bonilla, who prepares the CHB just the way customers like it. The Black Hat menu offers six traditional

steaks, like the New York Strip and ribeye. But the menu doesn't end there; Black Hat also offers the newer flat iron steak prepared two ways, steak tips, filet medallions and, of course, prime rib. The menu also includes a CHB burger, seafood and a few chicken items. All of the beef served is 100% CHB.

Rodriguez estimates he serves between 400 and 500 people a week, and the majority order steaks, so those orders add up to quite a large amount of CHB product. That equals an account which Earl Skahill of Meat Specialties of Colorado was excited to get. Meat Specialties of Colorado is a distributor of CHB products in the Denver area. Earl is the owner and says he met Rodriguez simply by frequenting the Black Hat Cattle Co. restaurant.

When Rodriguez first opened Black Hat, he was using beef from

a small beef packing plant in Colorado Springs, Earl explains. "The meat was wonderful, it really was," Skahill says. "But they really started gouging him on the price. I just went in and told him I could duplicate what he was buying at a more reasonable price, and that's how we got started."

Meat Specialties of Colorado started providing Black Hat with CHB products as well as its seafood and other meat needs. "It was a win-win for both of us," Skahill says.

So, for more than a year now, Black Hat Cattle Co.'s unique style has been further enhanced by CHB. "The upscale casual western theme fits Hereford beef well," Rodriguez says. "I like everything about it; I think the quality is certainly there."

The customers appreciate it as well. "Customers are very positive about my Certified Hereford Beef," Rodriguez says. "There's a consistency to it."

One might expect Rodriguez, after more than 25 years in the steak house business, to prefer some newfangled fancy steak cut, but he still claims the ribeye as his personal favorite. He says simply, "I think it's the most flavorful of all the steaks." **HW**

Editor's Note: For more on Black Hat Cattle Co., visit www.blackhatcattleco.com. The Web site includes directions to the restaurant for those looking for a Hereford steak during the National Western.