

What's Going On in Foodservice?

When I was a kid someone would give me a puzzle for my birthday or Christmas. Puzzles are good for making you move the pieces around until you get an exact fit. I liked the ones with big pieces and cardboard backing where the pieces were outlined. They seemed to go together easier.

On occasion my parents would have an older couple watch my brother and me while they were out. This couple always had a jigsaw puzzle, with 500 or so pieces and only a picture for a reference, scattered out on a table. It seemed to take them a little longer to put their puzzle together. I would watch them work together moving pieces this way and that, trying to get the pieces to fall into place. If they were having trouble with one piece, they would set it down, pick up a different piece and start the process all over again. When a piece did fall into place, I would see them sit up straight, throw their shoulders back and, with a smile, make a comment like, "I knew it would fit." Then they would go for the next piece.

In my first few months here at Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC, I have been working on the foodservice puzzle. One thing that makes the foodservice puzzle

different from others is that this puzzle never ends. Everyone has a puzzle he wants you to work on, and you can't work on just one puzzle at a time. In our foodservice puzzle, we have big and small pieces, and each one is important in developing the CHB® foodservice picture.

As I look at the CHB puzzle today, I am pleased to share our foodservice program has had its greatest success in the Eastern U.S. We have been fortunate to have Michael Elwer, sales and marketing developer, in that area. Elwer has a great deal of knowledge in the meat industry and has spent a number of years moving around his pieces to fit into the CHB puzzle.

Now that I have started my work on the CHB puzzle, there are a number of pieces I look at day to day. I would like to share a couple pieces of the puzzle with you.

The No. 1 goal of CHB LLC is to promote more high-quality sales of CHB in our existing distributor markets and in markets to come. Developing partnerships with foodservice distributors who will commit their time, energy and financial resources to promote CHB is essential to our puzzle.

CHB LLC staff recognizes the effort it takes for distributors to establish markets. This office

has been reviewing the relationships, licensing agreements and movement of product with current loyal customers to determine how staff can better serve their needs. We are starting to locate areas in the U.S. where CHB is not being offered and we will be seeking distributors in those areas.

It is our intent to be better partners in our customers' futures.

Carcass utilization

A second piece of the puzzle is carcass utilization. We are always looking for ways to develop additional value-added products for better carcass utilization. For some time, we have had partners providing great precooked products such as roast beef, corned beef and pastrami. These items have been offered by Dan Prize under the Hereford label to the retail side of CHB.

Now we are asking our foodservice distributors to take a look at these products. Another item on the retail side is an IQF (individual quick frozen) patty from Appert's (WOW) burgers. I'm excited about this product. In a recent blind taste test, the Hereford burger was cooked and compared to an Angus burger. The test consisted of aroma, beef flavor, tenderness,

appearance and juiciness. I am happy to say that the Hereford patty came out on top.

There are also gift boxes and special order programs available through Bell Creek Beef. These products are great for your personal use or for gifts to those you wish to thank or impress with the high quality of Hereford beef.

We are also working on additional items — for example, breaded portion products like cube steaks for chicken fried steaks, Italian steaks and precooked pot roast, just to name a few. Each of these items will be under the CHB label and will be available for retail and foodservice.

Little did I know that watching that older couple put a puzzle together would be a great lesson in life. Through teamwork, patience and perseverance anyone can complete a picture. As I move the puzzle pieces into place, I am convinced that the Hereford breed has the integrity to complete the foodservice distributors' beef needs and the needs of the customers they serve. The Hereford breed is, "The breed that built America and will feed America in days to come." I am grateful to be a part of the CHB LLC team. **HW**

