

MSU Student Team

Promotes Healthy Beef



By Robbie Ward

Beef kabobs, Philly cheesesteaks and juicy steaks can be part of the menu of people looking to lose weight.

Some people think they can't lose weight or maintain a healthy lifestyle that includes beef, myths Mississippi cattlemen and others in the industry want to dispel. In fact, beef is an excellent source of protein, zinc, vitamin B12, selenium and phosphorus.

People can dine on roasts, burgers and other beef products when looking for healthy foods. They just need to be aware of portion size and seek out lean cuts of beef, nutritionists say.

Another myth includes the high cost of beef products. Few beef cuts cost as much as filet mignon. An assortment of beef cuts go easy on the pocketbook.

Lean beef products can be tasty and affordable staples in anyone's diet, whether they want to lose weight or just maintain a healthy lifestyle.

That's what 10 Mississippi State University students plan to tell people across the state. Called the Beef Team, the students will take knowledge of beef's nutrition, recipes and portion size to schools, trade shows and supermarkets around the state. Serving as ambassadors for the beef industry, members of the Beef Team promote the food by visiting a cross section of the state to discuss its benefits.

The Beef Team is sponsored by the Mississippi Beef Council and three university departments—animal and dairy sciences, communication, and food science, nutrition and health promotion. Federal law requires all beef producers to pay a dollar for each animal sold, and much of this money goes toward beef education, promotion and research.

The Beef Team visits people of all ages and demographics to discuss the importance of a good diet and how beef can be a part of it. Earlier in the semester, the students attended an orientation to prepare them to speak to people throughout the state.

To help prepare them for answering questions, the students learned about food safety, consumer perceptions, beef preparation and cooking techniques and retail cuts from MSU professors and the university's chef.

Tony Garcia, a senior from Brandon, expanded his knowledge of cooking beef. Mostly a burger and steak kind of eater, Garcia said he looks forward to learning more about preparing beef to add variety to meals. He said while preparing to inform others about beef's health benefits and different recipes, he'll learn more for himself.

"This will show me more about what's out there for people to include in their meals," Garcia said before taking sample of beef stew. "I've been mostly a burger and steak kind of person."

During the Beef Team's orientation, Sammy Blossom, Mississippi Cattlemen Association executive vice president, visited to see beef spokespeople in action. Watching students prepare such meals as Mexican soup, spaghetti and meatballs and chili, Blossom said he felt confident about these "beef ambassadors" connecting with the public.

"These students will help kids understand that good diet is so important, and beef can be a part of it," Blossom said.

Photos by Russ Houston



Members of Mississippi State's Beef Team prepared for their internship to promote beef's nutritional value and different ways the meat can be prepared. Part of the training included the team splitting into three groups who competed to prepare meals in a competition similar to the popular Food Channel show *Iron Chef*. Beef Team members Michael Vance, left, Keri King and Tony Garcia prepare spaghetti and meatballs for a family with three children.

Opposite page, team member Mark Monroe concentrates on preparing a beef dish.