

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand, Bryan Schaaf coming to you hopefully in the waning days of Zoom style interviews, fingers crossed here. Cutting a podcast about a subject that is near and dear to I think all of our hearts, I am being joined here in our virtual studio by meat scientist, Diana Clark, chef Tony Biggs. Guys, how you doing?

Diana Clark:

Doing pretty good.

Tony Biggs:

Hey, you guys, love you.

Bryan Schaaf:

Today we're going to talk about a subject that, you guys spend a lot of time teaching. A lot of time trying to clarify or I guess open people's eyes to what truly is out there for a beef cuts standpoint. And we run into a lot of chefs who are always looking for... Some chefs are looking to be really unique and innovative, some chefs are looking to make money. Because there's nothing less sustainable than not making money in your restaurant. You're not going to be around very long. Today's subject is one of those that addresses both. We're talking about what is known in England as the [inaudible 00:01:27], that's not actually true, but it's the chuck roll. The chuck roll is a cut that, there's an awful lot going on there, but if you know how to follow the roadmap to break this down, there's an awful lot of potential in there.

Bryan Schaaf:

Diana, this is something that, I guess if there was a beef cut that you could give a big old bear hug to and profess your love to, this is what we're talking about, right?

Diana Clark:

Yeah, and especially because to me there's other cuts for sure that you can bring in and break down at your restaurant, but the little waste that's involved with this one is awesome. Because any scraps even that you get off of it can be turned into ground chuck. So that's the worst case scenario is that you're going to have a fantastic burger. So we all know that you at least have that going for it. But then you have your chuck eye steaks. You can get your Denver steaks out of there. You can get your Sierra steak. You can also get your country style short ribs. And then you can have your traditional ma and pa chuck roast. That's just perfect to shred apart, and chef Tony can talk more about the cooking side of things, especially when it comes... His shredded chuck roll, smoked, amazing. Amazing. So you could just do that alone, but it still allows you to have some creativity with it too.

Diana Clark:

I think everyone wants to have, maybe not everyone, but I think everyone deep down they want to have a knife in their hand and they want to be that person that's actually cutting the meat that they are serving. And this gives you that opportunity, especially at a really low cost.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Tony, how about you, man? I know a lot of people will shy away from getting this whole piece because there's an awful lot going on there. And unless you've had a couple cracks really trying to get through it as a chef, it can be real confusing. And maybe you end up making more burgers out of that than you really intended. You obviously have a long career in culinary. All around the world, many, many different continents and cultures and things like that. What was your learning curve on the chuck roll, from being a chef who's cooked everything and then being given this huge hunk of meat. How long did it take you to really figure out how this thing fits together, and more importantly, comes apart?

Tony Biggs:

Honestly, it was pretty intimidating at first. We're speaking to chefs all around the world, and foodies. You guys, I always preach this. You know all about ribs, strips, and tenders. But after working at Certified Angus Beef for a period of time, I have come to embrace the chuck roll. You guys mentioned making money. Yes, you can make money, but you can also be creative with this. You can have it both ways. The things you can do with this, like Diana was mentioning our smoked chuck roll, it is just amazing for so many different applications. Barbecue. It's kind of like a poor man's brisket as well. I've heard that terminology. So if you're out there and you want to save a dime, you really need to embrace the chuck roll. And you have to learn how to follow the roadmap, like Bryan was saying, and just work with, and more than once. Don't get frustrated with it. Learn about it, reach out to us. We have plenty of videos and we have plenty of cell sheets to walk you through this. And if you're really lucky, you can come visit us. We'd love to have you.

Tony Biggs:

But it's amazing. Why have a filet mignon or a strip steak for breakfast, where you could have a Denver steak for half the price? More than half the price? You can make medallions out of the Denver steak. The chuck flat is amazing now. People are really gravitating there. And with the food scene where it's going now, you're really reaching out to different cultures. That chuck flat is amazing on a Korean barbecue, if you cut it very thin and you marinate it with gojuchang and soy sauce and ginger and garlic and pan sear that real quick with a little bit of rice. You're making money there. And you can also have that creativity.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Well said. Diana, let's go back all the way to the very beginning of this. Before we're actually feasting. This muscle, there's a reason that 80/20 chuck is the gold standard in ground beef. The fat that is deposited here is pretty robust. But at the very beginning, even before that, this is a muscle that does an awful lot of work during its lifespan, correct?

Diana Clark:

Yeah, so where it sits, if you actually get a whole chuck roll in, you can actually see it curve up. It's right at the back of the neck. So if you run your fingers on the back of your neck and you're going down, that's where that chuck roll is starting. And then as it continues to go down, it leads right into that rib. So you're sitting at your back shoulder, center of the back. That animal, though, you think of the ribeye versus the chuck eye. You look at the photos that we have of the chuck eye steak, you can't really tell if it's a ribeye steak or a chuck eye steak. Unless you're cutting it yourself, you have no idea. And from a taste standpoint, you can't tell either, because you have all those great muscles. In fact, I even think it's better because-

Bryan Schaaf:

It is better.

Diana Clark:

You have your bigger spinalis on the chuck eye steak than you would have on your ribeye steak. So those steaks alone, to me, are worth it. Just those chuck eye steaks alone are totally worth it. And all the extra stuff that you can do with it, even as Tony was saying about you can shred the whole thing, you can smoke and shred small pieces of beef. They don't always have to be these giant pieces. They can be small leftover chunks that you just throw in your smoker, and then you add it into any dish that you have. Any vegetable dish of course tastes better with beef. So why not just throw that in there, right? There's always going to be an outlet for it. And the blend, that 80/20 blend, a lot of the fat that's even within the chuck roll is marbling. You think of that serratus ventralis, that's your underblade where your chuck flap leads into. That's loaded with marbling. So you're getting all that extra flavor just from the fat itself too.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. So if anybody asks the question, I'm cooking vegetables tonight, what's the best seasoning or spice blend I can put on this? You should be like, 80/20 chuck.

Diana Clark:

Yes, exactly. That is exactly right.

Bryan Schaaf:

As we progress, and I want to make sure we land this, with all the different things that you can do from the chuck roll, I want to talk about what is inside of it. It's like a beef pinata. You whack this thing with a bat and all these different steaks and cuts fall out. All the different things that you can do with this cut because of what's in it. Di, can you give us a rundown of all the different cuts that you see pop up that come out of this sucker? Because it's a long, long list.

Diana Clark:

At the top of course you have your trim in here, but then you're also going to have, your steaks, you're going to have your Denver steaks, which is more of, I guess you could say that serratus ventralis, that short rib. You can cut those. It doesn't have to be a Denver steak. You don't have to cut it thin. You can actually make those your braised short rib option. We already talked about your chuck eye steaks that you would have. Then following right behind your chuck eye steaks, you would actually have your boneless country style short ribs. So think about it the way it is in pork. That's the exact same thing in beef. So a nice little braising option. However, we did actually grill these up at the Culinary Center once and they ate fantastic. I was shocked. It was delicious.

Diana Clark:

And then again you're going to have your chuck roast and everything. But then I think one of the really hidden gems is that splenius muscle, which is your Sierra steak. And that really looks exactly like a flank steak. I call it the chuck flank because I really don't know how else to describe it. But you can cook it, Tony's taken that to a new level. He could share with you how he's actually done that. And then you also would have your rhomboideus muscle on there, that is your neck hump, and that makes a fantastic

chicken fried steak. If you take that and you actually pound it down and bread it, oh my gosh, it's incredible.

Bryan Schaaf:

So when you look at all the different things that come out of this, I think a lot of chefs, a lot of meatheads like to play this game, well, I'm a ribeye guy. I'm a New York strip guy. You could play that game just inside the chuck roll. Chef Tony, man, when you get these things, and obviously you get to get these things whole pieces a lot of times. When you're breaking them down, when you're busting this down, what are your favorite things to make if you're given a whole chuck roll? Where are you running with this?

Tony Biggs:

First of all, I love that saying pinata. I'm going to use that. Wow. You just hit the nail of the head. Because it's so versatile. When we have guests at our Culinary Center I'm always preaching the Sierra steak. It's like a flank steak. If you marinate it properly and put it right on the grill, on they barby, you just have amazing eating experience. That is just unbelievable. I love the chuck flap because of the versatility. You can do a lot of things with this. You can sous vide, you can freeze and then slice it very paper thin or quarter inch thin on your slicer. Marinate and sear it real hard. It is amazing, really amazing. And you're making money off of this.

Tony Biggs:

For those who want a beef stew, a really good Cajun beef stew with beer and tomato paste and Cajun seasonings, all those trim that Diana was talking about you can use for this. So nothing goes to waste on this. It's amazing. And if you want those three beautiful chuck eye steaks, lot of folks want to know what the Delmonico is, well, that is the Delmonico steak. Those are the most tender, beautiful steaks. Those are like gold. Again, it took me a while to embrace it, but now this is my teddy bear.

Bryan Schaaf:

And again, the market is really what determines pricing, but it stands to reason, as with any other beef cut, if you buy the whole piece and are willing to do the knife work, you're going to save some money. What's the difference in what people are looking at here if they bring in this entire piece from really a price standpoint?

Diana Clark:

Well, that's the hard part too is that really, no one I know is actually breaking it down for you. So it's either you get it whole, or you don't get it-

Bryan Schaaf:

Sounds like my grandmother.

Diana Clark:

I know that some people do a little bit of work, and maybe they might separate that chuck eye log at the top from the underblade and sell you both of them, but that's really as far as I've seen it. We've had a few chefs that have actually come through the Culinary Center, and they decided to try chuck roll on their own, purchase it and see what they could do. And it's very intuitive when you start to pull it apart.

The seams are rather large, so you can really figure out what you need to do. You might make a mistake every now and again, but that's okay. That's the beauty of it. You still can do something with it. So I think that's the fun part about it. You're not having to shell out a lot of money up front just to play around with it. It's just to try it and see what you can do with it on your menu. I feel like you have so many different cuisines that can be satisfied with one cut, versus trying to have to inventory so many different types of cuts and try to guess of what people are going to want to have that night.

Tony Biggs:

This is also a poor man's barbacoa.

Diana Clark:

Oh, yeah.

Tony Biggs:

We've done barbacoa with this. If you want to stick this in the ground and cook it with vegetables and smoke and have a real great presentation, you just tie that up and put that into a barrel into the ground, cover it, and you just have an amazing piece of meat. I've used this for barbacoa. It's amazing.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah, yeah. And both of you have a lot of experience rolling with this as well, but I always like to think of the chuck roll, I always associate it with the great Craig [inaudible 00:15:28], who we refer to internally as the [inaudible 00:15:32] Yoda. This is the guy who was really the first one that I was aware of who was really embracing this idea of maximizing the profitability off of this cut. Our buddy Dave [inaudible 00:15:46], who's actually going to be on with us next week, is a disciple of that school of thought. Can either one of you, whoever wants to jump in, talk us through how you're going to go through this. I know Craig would always make his, basically he would pay for the entire piece on those chuck eye steaks, and then everything else is pure profit for whatever he wants to make. He's got his Denver steaks, of course he makes a lot of sausages and charcuterie and things like that. But how would you guys go about this?

Diana Clark:

I feel very similarly on that. You have to realize that it's going to be a specialty item. Your chuck eye steaks, you'd have to cut through a lot of chuck roast to offer that as a consistent thing on your menu, so maybe you only offer it on a specific night, or you only have so many of them. But it doesn't matter, because you're going to keep pulling people in, because that's going to be a driver of I really want to have that steak. The next best cut, I feel like those Denver steaks, you actually get an enormous amount of them when you're cutting the chuck roll. So then you're just left with a few other odds and ends to play with. But chef Tony can take that flank steak, that splenius or your chuck flank, you can feed a lot of people with just one of those. I think that's the cool part of it is you can really extend it out to different areas. I do love what Craig did with those chuck eye steaks. I think that is your key.

Diana Clark:

And you need to make sure your wait staff is comfortable in talking about the chuck roll and why it's so unique that we're breaking it down, because no one else is doing it. So if you have that as an anchor point, that's your experience, I think that's a neat thing. You could challenge someone to eat every cut from the chuck roll. That would be kind of a cool thing to-

Tony Biggs:

Challenge accepted. We've done a couple of things that are really different with the chuck roll too, and center of the plate. Our chuck roll grilled cheese sandwich is-

Diana Clark:

Oh my gosh.

Tony Biggs:

Really is epic, and it's famous. We smoke that chuck roll, salt and pepper, smoke it, we shred it beautiful. You've got all that beautiful marbling and that fat and all that juiciness. We toast brioche bread with Havarti cheese and a sriracha mayo with marinated onions, and we just put that on the grill. I'm telling you, you get \$12 for this sandwich, with about four to five ounces of chuck roll. It's good. We do a tomato fettuccine with shredded chuck roll, with pecorino cheese for an appetizer. It's amazing. The things you can do with this chuck roll is just... I didn't even mention tacos. I don't even mention burritos. I don't even mention chipotle bowls. But those are some of the things you can do with it.

Bryan Schaaf:

You can make tacos out of anything.

Tony Biggs:

You can make tacos.

Bryan Schaaf:

Availability, it seems like sometimes we talk about these different cuts and it's real cool and you've got to try this, but there's only two pounds of each cut on one cow. So good luck. Chuck roll though, it's raining chuck roll out there, right?

Diana Clark:

Yeah, it's definitely a large amount of chuck roll to be had by many, so that's the beauty of the cut. It is there and available for sure, yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

Excellent. It's funny you mentioned, it's a great piece to experiment with or to play around with, if you're going to pull samples or something like that, because if you do ding it, if you nick it, if you gouge something, you're making burgers. Or my personal favorite use of, I don't know, we'll call it misfit beef that's been dinged, schnitzel it. Tony, you can get down on some schnitzel, right?

Tony Biggs:

Somebody mentioned it before about the chicken fried steak. This is kind of the same thing. You can take a piece of this, because of the marbling, because of the texture, you can pound it out very lightly, you can bread it with panko breadcrumbs. Diana and I are Italian. Well, I'm not really Italian, but I grew up Italian-

Diana Clark:

Yeah, you're essentially Italian.

Tony Biggs:

You can make a parmesan. You can make a beef parmesan with this, and it's just lovely. And the meatballs, because of the marbling, because of the moisture inside this, when you grind it up, add some pecorino cheese, lots of garlic. I'm telling you, the meatballs are fabulous here.

Bryan Schaaf:

See, you blew your cover when you said garlic. Garlic. You're Irish from New England, aren't you? The chuck roll, guys, is there a more opportune cut out there? If there's one thing, if you're sitting next to somebody on a flight from we'll say Cleveland to Detroit, which is about 23 seconds, and somebody says, "What is it that I need to learn?" Is there anything that springs to mind even more than the chuck roll, or is this it? This is the magic bullet, right?

Diana Clark:

If I owned a restaurant, that's what I would do. Chuck roll.

Tony Biggs:

It's my new teddy, really. Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf:

And we're not talking Teddy Bruschi, Mr. New England Patriots fan.

Tony Biggs:

Nope, not Teddy Bruschi. Teddy bear.

Bryan Schaaf:

Outstanding. Well, if this is your first time tuning into the Meat Speak Podcast, powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand, know that you can catch us across all of your major podcasting platforms, Google Play, Apple Spotify, or by visiting certifiedangusbeef.com/podcast. Until next time, chef Tony Biggs, meat scientist Diana Clark, y'all, thanks for joining us, and y'all be safe and make sure you get some chuck roll. And remember, there's no mistakes, only happy accidents that result in hamburgers.