

Bryan Schaaf: If you are joining us for the first time, we appreciate you tuning into this episode of Meat Speak powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. My name is Bryan Schaaf. With me as always is chef Tony Biggs. How you doing?

Tony Biggs: Hey my friend, always my pal, my big brother. How have you been this week?

Bryan Schaaf: Tremendous. Tremendous.

Tony Biggs: Beautiful.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. And let me tell you something. I love meat, right? I love well marbled, delightful, elegant, braised meat.

Tony Biggs: You do?

Bryan Schaaf: Today we're going to talk about ... I feel like primals on the beef animal or sub-primals are a bit like children. It's very difficult to say. This one is my favorite, right? Maybe there's some moments when you have that thought, right? But today, let's talk about serratus ventralis, more commonly known across the culinary world as the humble short rib.

Tony Biggs: Wow.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah.

Tony Biggs: When is the first time you had a beautiful braised short rib? When I went to Culinary Institute of America, and I worked for classical chefs like Klaus Friedenreich and my mentors at the CIA, let me tell you what the utmost first cooking method was on their radar was brazing. For some reason braising, to be a great chef or a great cook, you must know how to braise, and you must not know how to break those fibers and those connective tissues down so you have a tender, most delicious piece of meat.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. there's something so elegant and classic about a braised short rib. Generally, it's over a bit of starch of some sort. Generally, to throw out the word tender, of course it's tender, it's braised, but the short rib itself, because it is so packed with marbling, it is so packed with that intra-muscular fat, that when you braise a short rib versus braising something out of the round for instance, there is this delicate beefiness that you just don't get anywhere else in the animal.

Tony Biggs: How about fall off the bone?

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah.

Tony Biggs: How about fall off the bone? Beautiful, right? But you know, as we spoke today, there's so many Asians, they do a lot of different things with the short ribs like

the flanking cut where you have those three bone in rib type of off the chuck, and it's about a quarter inch thick. And when marinated with soy sauce, some ground pear, ginger, a little bit of mirin for about four to five hours, and you throw these babies on the hot, hot grill, and I'm telling you, you serve this with some garlic rice and this is just epic. Unbelievably delicious.

Bryan Schaaf: So, so good. It is grilled a high heat application on something that's traditionally braised. Is there another cut out there that it's widely understood, yeah, if you give this a low and slow application, it's going to be delicious. But what other cut is there that you can say, or you could just slice it this way, crush it on a flat top, and it's equally delicious?

Tony Biggs: Well, I personally love to braise low and slow, and then when that short rib comes out of its braising liquid, of course I save it, I make a nice sauce out of it, but then I will throw that on the grill to get a little bit of char on it to give that nice crust around the short rib, and that's beautiful. You know some of our partners are the greatest barbecue experts in the world? What do they do with the plate short rib? The three bone, beautiful plate short rib. When they just take that bone and it slips right out of the meat, that is an epiphany to me. Really. It's just amazing. You know you've done well, and that meat is cooked to perfection.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. When it falls apart completely. I don't know that there is another cut that has such an array of ways that it's used culture by culture. You talked about the way that it's classically used in Asia or Jewish style is also sort of that flank in style short rib as well. But we've seen here in America it's not just about that smoked plate short rib, or those smoked chuck, right? There are-

Tony Biggs: You can do that with low and slow, Bryan. You can do that low and slow in a marinade. My personal favorites are ... Sometimes folks go, "Oh wow, what do I marinate it in? Do I marinate it in water, beef stock?" I've marinated my short ribs in the root beer and Coca-Cola to give that sweetness, so when that short rib is breaking down in the braising liquid, you're getting all the beautiful juices from that short rib. Why would you throw it away when you can take that liquid and reduce it with the help of some beautiful spices like cinnamon stick, and star anise, and palm sugar, and soy sauce, and you've got the Coke that's going to give you that sweetness as well, and you make a beautiful sticky sauce with that to go over that short rib. That is just one application.

In the German culture and French, they love to use red wine, bay leaf, and different herbs to make their braising liquid, but you've seen a huge output in the purchasing of, what are they called? Crock-Pots. Around the world, right? Where families in America now are just on the go 24/7, so they're picking up their bone in short ribs or they're short rib, placing it into their Crock-Pot, and at six o'clock they come home and guess what? They've got a full dinner. Everything's falling off the bone, fork tender.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. So, when we talk about the short rib or the serratus ventralis, that's a wonderful term to memorize, we are talking about the entire muscle that starts all the way down by the plate, and criss-crosses the rib all the way up into the chuck where even after the first chuck bone, your chuck short ribs that are bone-in will typically have four bones to them. But even after that first bone, the muscle continues into what's now becoming sort of more classically known as the Chuck Denver or the chuck flap is what it's known as. And then, it even continues farther on into the under blade, which is classically found on mom's pot roast. If you go to a chuck roast at the grocery store, generally it has some of the under blade still on. That's that same serratus ventralis muscle, and that robust marbling continues on throughout. So, it's very consistent as we go.

Going back a few years, Andrew Zimmern visited our culinary center, and one of the things that he wanted to see was the Chuck Denver, right? And in a grilling application, not a braised application, a high and hard stake application. This is probably three or four years ago, but since then I'm seeing Chuck Denver steaks everywhere. What can you tell me about the Denver steak? It's a little more beefy because it's got that marbling in it, yeah?

Tony Biggs:

Well, it's a fascinating question about the Denver steak. Those who are meatheads know what that is, right? You just explained it. But what we do at the Certified Angus Beef Culinary Center, when we bring chefs and customers in, we also provide an experience, education to make more money on secondary cuts of beef, and the Denver steak is one of those. It's actually gaining popularity in the restaurants and in banquets, but until someone experiences it, puts it in his or her mouth, they never really feel the appreciation for this. I've taught classes where why use a filet mignon, a strip, or middle meat for your breakfast side when you can get a low cost item that tastes juicy, tender, has all the marbling like a Denver steak and eggs.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. It's delightful. Coming up here, we're going to have a conversation with our favorite meat scientist on the entire planet, Diana Clark, and she's going to get a little bit more into the scientific side of it, but the thing that when I hear about short rib that jumps out to me is it's a bit of an experiment that we were able to pull off a few years ago and it's the idea of dry aging a short rib. Dry aging specifically a chuck short rib, right?

So, you've got the bones, you've got some added protection on there for a dry aging purpose, but at the same time you can only take short ribs to 12 to 14 days at most before you've gone a little too far in the dry aging process with them. But I will tell you from just a pure taste standpoint, I don't know that there is a more robust funk in the dry aging process that I've ever had then as what come off of these dry aged short ribs. I don't know from a practical standpoint, from a yield loss standpoint that it would ever make sense in a restaurant setting on a regular basis. I think when you actually run the numbers, it comes in only slightly more expensive than a a prime tenderloin.

Tony Biggs: Imagine that in a burger. Imagine this in a three blend burger of that dry age chuck. Wow.

Bryan Schaaf: It's incredible. Incredible flavor. But nevertheless, if you are one of these folks who likes to play around with their own dry aging program, perhaps you've tuned into one of our other episodes here on Meet and Greet talking about dry aging, and talking about how to kickstart your own dry aging cooler. That is on there, big, shameless self plug, if you want to look that one up. But maybe you are playing in that, and maybe you do have an opportunity to try your own dry aged short rib.

Chef, we are going to take a break now. We're going to come back here in a minute with Diana Clark, and we're going to dive deeper into the serratus ventralis.

Tony Biggs: Hey, wait a minute. We're going to give all our customers, our listening customers a chance to win, what did you say, a new Porsche, if they understand all the meat cuts in Latin?

Bryan Schaaf: I will buy it for you with somebody else's money. How about that?

Tony Biggs: I love it.

Bryan Schaaf: We'll be back in a minute with Diana Clark talking serratus ventralis.

Back here on the podcast. Frequent guest. One of the smartest humans I've ever met.

Diana Clark: Not true.

Bryan Schaaf: Oh my gosh. You're just a wealth of knowledge. Diana Clark, meat scientist. How are ya?

Diana Clark: Doing good. How about yourself?

Bryan Schaaf: I'm really good because we're going to talk about one of my favorite, favorite ... I feel like I say this about everything. I guess I just love food that much.

Diana Clark: Or beef specifically.

Bryan Schaaf: That's right. We're going to talk about, to the layman, sometimes I like to throw around the Latin root just so it sounds like I'm more intelligent than I am. "We're going to talk about serratus ventralis today," which more commonly known in the culinary world as short ribs.

Diana Clark: Yes.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. And short ribs to you, they kind of hold a special part of your existence as well, don't they?

Diana Clark: Oh yeah. I always like to say short ribs just have that flavor that everyone goes to. That mom and pop flavor that your mom just cooked a roast, and you were so excited that it was coming out, and you just put gravy and mashed potatoes all over it. You know? Just that homie goodness in the middle of winter. Aw, I love it.

Bryan Schaaf: So good. They're so packed with ... I feel like a lot of times when you see those raw meat shots where it's just packed with marbling, it's almost always a portion of that short rib muscle.

Diana Clark: Always period. I feel like you can scratch out the almost. It's always marbled that well.

Bryan Schaaf: Can you explain that? What does ... We're talking about, I'll say it again so I sound intelligent, serratus ventralis. It's a muscle that starts down on the plate or the bottom part of the rib, extends forward through the chuck, and ends up terminating there. But can you talk about why is that, or is there a reason that muscle is so well marbled the entire way through?

Diana Clark: I don't truly know exactly why the marbling's so dense there, but it does. It starts on actually so it'd be your sixth, seventh, and eighth ribs. So, that eighth rib is kind of where it starts moving forward, and then goes all the way up in through that first rib, kind of just nicks the top of it, and then continues on underneath that chuck roll. Used a lot with locomotion. So, I'm assuming that it's very vascular dense, and because of which it's needed a lot in the animals, so they're trying to make sure that it's always packed full of that nutrient so the muscle can use it when the animal's alive. But for our purpose, it's just always that tasty piece that we know is going to pull through every single time.

Bryan Schaaf: It just works. A good friend of ours, if you are tuning in for the first time here and you want to go back through the podcast library, there's an episode all about kind of why meat matters in the world. And our guests that day was a good chef friend who both you and I know, his name's Rick Tramonto, and when we talked about Rick about his favorite cuts, what's his go-to? At first, he kind of jumped on of course the tomahawk, right? And of course it's flashy. But then he backtracked, and he said, "I really like braised pieces of meat." And when you think of short rib, to me that is the ... You can make your pot roast, but the short rib really is that elevated high end. He used the word elegant. It's just a really gentle presentation, yeah?

Diana Clark: Yeah. Especially when you kind of just lay it on. Usually it's laid on top of a polenta, or mashed potatoes, or something. It gives you that cushion effect, too, and you don't need a knife. You really just take your fork and just cut through it like butter, and that flavor's just incredible.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. Yeah. That fat content that you do find. When we discussed short ribs, of course a braise is the first thing that comes to mind, and probably to its detriment has probably limited a lot of people's views of what to do with a short rib. But you've done a lot of work with the plate chuck or the plate short ribs, the chuck short ribs, the various iterations of it. Where can you go with short ribs beyond just letting it cook for 12 hours in its own beautiful juices?

Diana Clark: That's the best part about that cut is so short ribs, you can take it, cook it nice, low and slow, braised, make sure that you have all that moisture in there, retain that juiciness, or you just cut it a little bit thinner, cut about a quarter of an inch thick. Those are called your Denver steaks. So, now you'd get that beefy, robust flavor that you get in your typical braised short ribs, but you have that grill accompanying it with as well. So, now you get that great char on the outside. It's delicious. Everyone that tries it is amazed by it. The first time I had it, I thought, man, this is going to be tough as nails, but it's not. It needs to be cooked to a medium degree of doneness, but once you hit that, you have these two combinations that you can't find anywhere else.

And I feel like in the United States, we're like, yes, we've gotten this, but really this has been a staple in Korean barbecue for so long. They have their Korean barbecue ribs where they just cut them an eighth of an inch thick against the bone. So essentially, they're creating thinner Denver steaks that they grill really quick on some hibachi style grills, voila, there they go and they've got all this tremendous flavor to them. So now, we're starting to realize, oh, there's a lot of potential in this cut.

Bryan Schaaf: I'm glad you touched on that. The idea of the flank in style short ribs, Korean short ribs. I've also seen them talked about as Jewish style short ribs, which I never made that connection before as well. But can you talk about classically, when you think of bone in short ribs, there's plate short ribs, there's Chuck short ribs. And I know you've done some work. A lot of times it seems like for years it was like, well, what's the difference? Well, the number of bones. But is there a little more to it in terms of even flavor variances that you may pick up?

Diana Clark: Yeah. So, your plate short ribs are going to have three bones, your chuck short ribs are going to have four bones, but really it's still short rib muscle and bone. In terms of flavor alone, I really don't notice much of a flavor. Now, I will have to say that as you move into your plate short ribs, you actually get a little bit thicker of a silver skin that goes over that short run muscles, so you might have more of a tougher bite at times, but you can easily remove that as well. Now, your plate short ribs usually will have a bigger, more impressive bone. They're just quite a bit longer, but that doesn't mean you can't get that fantastic presentation that you see also in chuck short ribs. We make some phenomenal osso buco style chuck short ribs [inaudible 00:18:29] to say plum in Cleveland. Wow. Their presentation of that is just incredible. It's a lot of fun to see people take these cuts that really are kind of great priced and make them look just elegant, and people just crave them then.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. You mentioned the plums short rib dish. That's a Vince [Tamasic 00:18:51]-Brett Sawyer combination. I believe it's meant to be a taco in the end, right? It's a self-serve taco where for me, and I'm a meat guy, but for me the taco shell, it's a cool ranch.

Diana Clark: It's hilarious.

Bryan Schaaf: It's just, yeah, and knowing those guys, it doesn't really surprise you. And of course it just tastes ridiculous. So, we've seen the growth of the popularity of the Denver, right? I can remember five years ago, six years ago, I think the only menu that I ever saw a true Denver steak appear on was actually outside of Denver. Up in Boulder, it was at a Black Belly restaurant up in Boulder. It was the only place I'd seen the Denver on a menu. Now, it seems like everybody kind of knows about them.

Diana Clark: Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah, and so can you talk about with the fact it's a very limited supply of those Denver steaks, of that serratus ventralis that extends past where the bone ends, so your true kind of boneless short ribs. But there's also an under blade component as well. Can you talk about that? Vince Tamasic from The Plum who you just mentioned, when he couldn't quite get his hands on the Denver's that he wanted, he took a page out of the Diana Clark playbook and went to his meat distributor, and I'll be damned if they didn't find him a fantastic alternative.

Diana Clark: So, that's the beauty of that muscle is that so after your bone-in chuck short ribs, then you have your chuck flap that are all traditionally boneless, and that's where you can get Denver steaks cut out of. But if you actually look at the NAMP guide or [NAMI 00:20:32] guide that actually decodes all of your cuts, and sub primals, and everything, the true Denver comes out of that chuck under blade. And so, the whole under blade of the chuck roll itself is more serratus ventralis. So now, you don't have just this small block that weighs maybe a pound and a half to two pounds as you do in your chuck flap, but you have about four pounds, five pounds depending on how big this chuck roll is of just serratus ventralis that you can take and cut into more Denver steaks, or you can cut it into your smaller cubes that you can use for braising.

So now, you have this huge avenue to to run these different menu items off of, and you're still using one cut. I really appreciate it more there. When the chefs ask me specifically at Certified Angus Beef for some short rib muscle, I typically just pull off the bottom of the chuck roll. One reason, because we break down sides of beef, and we have a lot of chuck roll. So, then I can purpose that under blade though for those applications, and they still do it the exact same way of embracing it and shredding it. Smoked under blade. Oh my gosh. Now, that's incredible, too.

Bryan Schaaf: Now, why does the smoked under blade? Is it because of the fat content?

Diana Clark: Oh yeah. So now, imagine this, so you're thinking about the smoking process, you're losing moisture. That's going to be a huge loss. You lose about 20, 30% of moisture alone. But now, I've just condensed that beefy flavor. Chuck short ribs, short ribs in general, that serratus ventralis muscle is usually 75 to 80% lean. That means that other portion of it is all fat, but marbling, and marbling just that oleic fatty acid is so satiating. We've talked about before with burgers and briskets, and everything like that. You have that in your bite of barbecue, and it's incredible.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. Since we're on the topic of barbecue, the idea the plate short rib, can you talk about how it kind of does smack against, at least somebody like myself who has ... I enjoy eating. We'll say that. The idea of a plate short run versus a chunk short rib, why would you spec a plate short rib over a chuck short rib? It really comes down to presentation, right?

Diana Clark: It does. Plate short rib, like I said before, that bone is more massive. It really just ... it's the bone. The bone looks cool. It's giant. Great presentation, especially in barbecue when you have this huge thing sitting down in front of you. Barbecue is already this barbaric, caveman-esque deal, so now you have this big hunk of meat with the bone. It has bone in it, so you're allowed to eat it with your hands by rules. So, it's just that aspect of it. And chuck short ribs, the bone's just shorter. that's really the only difference, but from a flavor standpoint that bone is not adding any flavor.

But we're now more so than ever in the era where we eat with our eyes. We don't just eat with our eyes. Our neighbors look at our pictures and they eat with their eyes. It has to look good. We always fight that presentation battle, and that's why I think so many people are gravitating towards those plate short ribs. But now, we're starting to realize you can have that incredible plate presentation with our chuck short ribs, and it gives you so much more leverage on your menu.

Bryan Schaaf: Is it, just kind of a general a misnomer, yes, the chuck short ribs, the bone is going to be shorter, but it doesn't mean it's always that much shorter, right?

Diana Clark: Correct. It's not always. It honestly depends on what that packing plant has homes for elsewhere. So, if I'm a packing plant that has a home for chuck flap, well maybe my chuck short ribs don't have as many boxes that they're going into, so I'm going to cut those smaller and make my chuck flap larger. So that way, I can put more pounds in those box and sell more meat versus putting it in that chuck short rib box that I don't have a home for. So, it's kind of getting in that balance and figuring out who the best packing plan is to work with in order to get your spec.

And maybe you have high enough tonnage where you can even say, "Hey, this is the way I want them to cut, and I'm going to guarantee that I'm buying them from you at this point." So, you can kind of work with some of those and see what you can get out of it, but that's the biggest struggle with chuck short rib is

you can have that varying degree of bone length when plate short ribs is pretty consistently going to be a longer bone. And usually, you can even spec a six to nine inch size bone, too.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. A lot of chefs, a lot of food people in general are concerned about food waste, right? The bone is generally something that people struggle to do with, and I found a fantastic use for that plate short rib bone when you're done with it. I learned this from our friends down a Black's Barbecue, Jenga, bone Jenga. It's a-

Diana Clark: That is incredible.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. You get a few short ribs and you get a few adult beverages in you.

Diana Clark: Oh my gosh. I really like that.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. A little bone Jenga is good for the soul.

Diana Clark: I have yet to see that.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. Yeah. It's very, very impressive.

Diana Clark: Gosh, they always ... Barret is just always thinking of that next great thing. I swear.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah, but to this day you still can't really eat the bone.

Diana Clark: No.

Bryan Schaaf: We're working on that though.

Diana Clark: No, I know. Well, maybe one day.

Bryan Schaaf: That's right. Cook them long and slow. Diana Clark, meat scientists. We appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to join us once again. Chef Tony and I, we'll be back in a moment to talk a little bit more about delicious short ribs. We'll be back.

Back here on the Meat Speak podcast, Bryan Schaaf, Tony Biggs. That was Diana Clark, meat scientist. Always love hearing from her.

Tony Biggs: Love her. Just love, love, love her.

Bryan Schaaf: Love me some Diana Clark.

Tony Biggs: Yup.

Bryan Schaaf: You know chef, short ribs, I'm just going to keep saying it, serratus ventralis, serratus ventralis, serratus ventralis. It makes the mouth happy to say it. Classically, it's a braised item, right? But sue veying is also ... Not only is it acceptable, there are probably some advantages to doing a short rib under vacuum, aren't there?

Tony Biggs: Unbelievable. Chefs and even just the classical cooks at home, we're in an age now that people really know what they're eating, they're educating themselves about food, and there's a lot of folks out there who know more than maybe a classical chef or ... Because they've studied and that's their passion. But sue vey over the last ... It's not an old term. I was using it in the late '80s with Vie de France and the Hyatt Corporation, but it really didn't take off until the last 10 years when molecular cuisine became very, very popular, and that's really part of the cooking staple. That's a piece of equipment now that all chefs have in their kitchen to produce really great, fine quality meals. The great attributes would sue vey is longer cooking time, slower cooking time, and uniformity of your finished product.

So, it's not just falling off the bone as maybe a short rib, if you're braising, the bone falls off. You got kind of a control over your product, and sue vey, and the water bath. And then, right now, those are cooked products. You can chill them, put those in your refrigerator, your freezer. If you have an order in a restaurant, you can take it out, re-therm it, and voila, you've got a beautiful, beautiful product there.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And once it's done, once you've cooked it, whether braise or sue vey, I think I probably know more people who've got it on their menu and they actually do a sue veyed process. A lot of times, and it's because the temperature control is very specific.

Tony Biggs: Very specific.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah.

Tony Biggs: Yeah.

Bryan Schaaf: But once that process is done, or honestly even before it goes into the bag to get sue veyed, there are some different knife cuts that you can do that'll make this a pretty unique cut, yeah?

Tony Biggs: Hey, you know what? We've discovered five stars to our meat scientist, Diana Clark. She's done amazing things with her knife, and the one thing that we've learned and put that out in the industry is the plate short rib osso buco, and also the plate short rib tomahawk. These are amazing. It's a matter of cutting the plate short rib in a different technique. Taking the skin and the connective tissue off the bone. Leaving a five to six inch bone, and then wrapping that meat around the bone, tying that like you would do a roast, or a chuck roll, or a roast,

and then braising it, keeping it all together, and you have a beautiful, just absolutely gorgeous, stunning center of the plate cut with a six inch bone coming out, and a beautiful sauce, and just fall off the bone tender, Bryan. Epic.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. And it's funny when you look at the pallets of most diners, as robust and impressive as your classic rib tomahawk is, the ribeye steak with the long bone attached to it, I don't know, speaking as somebody who is a bit of a professional eater, I don't know that I would choose a traditional tomahawk over a braised short rib tomahawk. Just because there's so much richness in that short rib that you don't necessarily get from more of a grilled steak item.

Tony Biggs: Bryan, why is it that when you eat a short rib and the sauce is epic, incredible, you just want to close your eyes and just savor every single morsel bite.

Bryan Schaaf: Yeah. I actually find myself doing ... It's the same thing I do when I eat really good barbecue. Once I'm done eating, I'm looking for bread to mop up every last bit of ju that I didn't-

Tony Biggs: I spill this on my lap. That's why I need those plastic bibs when I eat barbecue because I'm taking the corn bread, which is crumbly already. It's coming from my mouth and I just look so idiotic when I eat barbecue.

Bryan Schaaf: Oh, well chef, that is about all the time that we have for this episode. If this is your first time tuning into the Meat Speak podcast powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand, we invite you to subscribe. It's available across most podcasting platforms. By now, there are a number of other episodes that you can pick and choose from. If you like what you're doing, or if you want to shoot us an email. Let us know if you like what we're doing, if you don't like what we're doing, if you have some ideas for things you would like to learn from the good chef or our meat scientist friends, just shoot us an email at podcast@certifiedangusbeef.com. We'd be quite happy to hear from you. Until next time, chef.

Tony Biggs: Bye-bye.