

Bryan Schaaf:

Back here on the Meat Speak Podcast powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand. Bryan Schaaf, Chef Tony Biggs. How you doing, sir?

Tony Biggs:

Hey man. How are you today? You doing good?

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm doing well. I've got my coffee in my right hand, my mouse in my left hand and I'm talking to you.

Tony Biggs:

Have you gotten your take-out Egg McMuffin yet?

Bryan Schaaf:

I have. It is a Sausage McMuffin. Thank you very much.

Tony Biggs:

Okay. Was it delivered properly? Was it hot and was it well received?

Bryan Schaaf:

It was a bastion of consistency. I will say that.

Tony Biggs:

Good. Good. Good. Okay.

Bryan Schaaf:

In case you haven't picked up on it, one of the things that we wanted to take some time to talk about is a subject that really Tony has been spending a lot of time researching. Of course, there were a lot of things that resulted in the fallout of COVID and restaurants having to shut down and change their business models. Some fared pretty well, some didn't fare nearly as well because they're literally learning on the fly. A lot of things that they've never done before because they're not necessarily built for takeout and quick service and things like that. We aren't here to solve all the world's problems, but we do like to think we've got a certain expertise when it comes to beef. And Tony you have spent a long time really, you've spent most of COVID. We'll jokingly say you've spent a lot of COVID ordering takeout.

Tony Biggs:

Since the COVID, let's face it. food is never going to... Especially steak will never perform the way you serve it at your restaurant right, Bryan. It's just not. And I think the most difficult thing that our partners are seeing, especially steakhouses is how to get that steak from A to Z, just like you would get it in a steakhouse. Bryan, you and I, we take take out for granted because we just want it. We want it now; we want to digest it; we want to eat it; we don't care how it gets there and we're just going to mung. Mangia that's Italian for, "Let's eat. Baby." But you can take measures to ensure that your takeout and beef going out will still be the best experience your guests can expect.

Bryan Schaaf:

It's a funny thing. When you think about the restaurant industry as a whole, there are certain foods we've been getting as takeout our entire life. I'll plug it if you go a month or so back there's an episode all about food trucks. Food trucks are built with food that's going to travel well, easily assembled they hand it to you off the truck. It's going to hold, it's going to be good. People aren't serving up 16 ounce strip steaks off of a food truck, and there's a reason for that. But that doesn't mean, especially with COVID with restaurants that maybe that's... that's what they've built their business model around. They need business just as much as anybody else, if not more right now.

Tony Biggs:

Well, you're right. And the thing about it is is that people still dining especially in America is a cultural thing. They want go out. They want to be with their friends, they want to enjoy a great meal, especially a steakhouse. And this is where this study came in. I was asked to do an in-depth study on takeout and what others are doing in the industry because, hey, let's face it. We're all in the same boat, right Bryan.

Bryan Schaaf:

Amen. Amen. Well, talk to me because steak is one of those things of course we say, let it rest. It comes off the grill; you've got to let it rest; you've got to let juices redistribute all these different things. But there's a difference between letting it rest, which it typically does before it goes out the kitchen to your table in the dining room versus being packaged up and sent out. What happens to the meat from that time when you are resting for that elongated period of time, what is going on there?

Tony Biggs:

Like I said, I learned a lot of things about takeout when you really focus in on delivery, like you said, the time you cook that steak, you take it off the grill, the perfect temperature that you wanted, and now you're going to package it and you're going to send it off. So during the study I visited 10 branded steakhouses, and this is what I found out. But to answer your first question is carryover cooking. That's what's going to happen with meat, especially once you take it off the grill and once you temp it, basically that is going to carryover another five to 10 degrees. And it could carry on more, depending on your packaging. So to answer your question, yes, the carryover cooking. But I'll tell you what, I visited 10 steakhouses, all different sizes.

Tony Biggs:

And most of them were branded, so I'm not going to call anybody out. When you call in for a steak, I feel like when you're talking about beef in general, that's the most expensive thing on your menu. So to me, as a steakhouse, I want to protect that most expensive thing on the menu. And I want to make sure, ensure that gets from point A to point Z in perfect time, and the communication is there to our guest. Because, hey, let's face it. If you pay \$95 for a Tomahawk Certified Angus Beef Prime, that steak better be dancing on the table, would you say Bryan for 95 bucks?

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. And I would say with full orchestra and backup dancing.

Tony Biggs:

Full orchestra, maybe even a background of Sinatra in the background because come on, Certified Angus Beef Prime is beautiful. So what I experienced, I did an order to a local steakhouse, a very high end by the way. And that steak was \$95 I ordered a Certified Angus Beef 36 ounce Tomahawk, 11 ounce filet mignon, and a 22 ounce bone-in ribeye. So this is what I found. I went to go pick it up. I didn't order Uber Eats or DoorDash. I went to pick it up. I wanted to make sure I was there on time. And I wanted to make sure that I was giving it enough time. And it took me about twenty-five minutes to get home, 25 minutes. So my study was based on a 20 minute interval from A to Z, if you can follow that.

Tony Biggs:

And so when I got at home I poured myself a glass of wine, put out the plates and that took another 10 minutes. So by 35 to 40 minutes, I was ready to eat my steak. So I proceeded to get into the bag, take out the filet, the ribeye, and now the Tomahawk, which the filet and rib-eye were okay. There was no garnish; there was no extra; there was no fanciness. And I paid top dollar for these cuts, Certified Angus Beef. But it was okay, I cut into them, they were cooked okay, to my liking. And what I to suggest everybody I'll bring this up again later on in this discussion is that, if you're going to send out a steak I would undercook it. So if I order a medium steak I would send it out medium rare because of the carryover cooking that you're going to... that attention.

Tony Biggs:

So if you're a server or you're the order taker for the most expensive things on your menu, these are things you have to let your customer know. Right Bryan. You would have to let them know, "Hey, you ordered a medium rare steak, but we're going to cook it rare for you. By the time it gets to your house because of that carryover cooking, it's going to be a beautifully medium rare." You would rather undercook than overcook because that's when you're going to have problems. Look steakhouse, they ruined my steak. I'm never going back. But also, you can put it into your your oven at home, warm it back up to your liking.

Tony Biggs:

You can do all these things. And I found that only one steakhouse out of 10 gave instructions on reheating, one out of 10. So that was very important to me getting those instructions. Let's go back to the Tomahawk, opened my bag up, the bone, here's the bone. The bone, well, where's the meat? They unattached the bone from the ribeye. Bryan, you know me, I like to get photos. It's a photo bomb experience. We've been to Cayman, Bryan, we've we taken the bone and eaten the beautiful piece of beef the Certified Angus Beef. And guess what? They took it off the bone, and that was wrapped in foil. But not only that, they took the ribeye itself and they sliced it and just threw it into a clamshell, a plastic clamshell. Well, you know as well as I do, steam is the killer of beef and take out. And if you guys don't know that I'm letting you know that, steam. So what happens with steam by the time you get that beautifully \$95 Tomahawk to your house, which is sliced in a clamshell, you open it up. It's well done. It's well done.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. And you've paid basically \$95 for a well done ribeye steak. And I love the ribeye steak but...

Tony Biggs:

Now tell me why the bone-in ribeye wasn't cut, which is actually the same thing as a Tomahawk. I know why because they didn't take the time for the right packaging of their Tomahawk. You let people know

that if you're going to pay \$95 for a prime Tomahawk, that you are going to get it a certain way, that's what I asked for. So what I did was I waited two weeks. I thought about it. I called the manager. Of course, he wasn't hostile but... Any great restaurateur, they think they do it right all the time. They don't want to be critiqued, but after a 20 minute conversation he probably agreed. He agreed and that he would go over it with his service and the order taker, taking the orders that they should take more beautiful care of our beef.

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. Well, I think every restaurateur, every chef, every GM, everybody who is in business and being successful is doing so because they all have the same goal in mind. And that's to make sure that at the end of the day, people are getting the best possible experience. The learning curve for takeout is pretty great, especially for steakhouses. But you had mentioned packaging a couple of times, if there is a magic bullet to getting steak from point A to point B, after that longterm, talk to us about the packaging. You said the clamshell, obviously steam, there's carryover cooking and then there's basically wrapping it in its own heat and it's just going to continue to cook and cook and cook and cook. There are ways to mitigate that though, correct?

Tony Biggs:

Yeah. There's so many things. And I know these restaurateurs are listening to us and we really appreciate listening to us. And I found out there's different levels of steakhouses, who are going to use different levels of packaging. I'm sure the lower end steak houses aren't going to purchase a \$2 and 50 cent package to go out, or they might as well just add that to the cost of the meat that's going out or the menu item. And a lot of folks are doing that. They raised their prices to attribute to the situation, the COVID situation because of the packaging prices. Another thing I found out that people are running out of packaging, the right packaging. And so now they're, I hate to say it, there's stores near you and me that sell things for a dollar.

Tony Biggs:

The aluminum 10 with the cardboard on top. You know what I'm talking about, dollar, that should give it away and that's okay for folks. But when you open that up, when you open that up after 20 minutes, you open that packaging up and everything is steamed to death. It's like, "Hmm." So I do have some suggestions. There is packaging where they have ventilation vents on top, and it's a plastic type of clamshell, not clamshell. I saw this at a branded steakhouse, I ordered a steak from it and I thought this was magical. And it also had the grooves if you know on the bottom. So when you place the steak and it's actually maybe off of the packaging bottom, maybe a quarter of an inch. So it's not cooking and in its own juices, somebody really gave it some thought when it came to steak at this particular steakhouse.

Tony Biggs:

And I loved the steam vents. When I got this home, I'll be honest, they don't serve Certified Angus Beef, but it was one of the best bone-in rib-eyes I've had and it was cooked to perfection. Another thing that a lot of folks do is and I totally agree with this, is you place some of hot veg in or a roasted onion, or a baked potato hot in with the steak. This is keeping everything warm, condensed in one area, and when you get it home it's much more warmer. I found this out. So if you just put a filet mignon in a clamshell, expect it to be cold when you get home. You with me Bryan.

Bryan Schaaf:

I'm tracking with you.

Tony Biggs:

Steam is a killer, but you know what we do and at Certified Angus Beef, our great culinary team is and I learned this in the hotel. I have to admit Janos Kiss was the corporate chef for Hyatt Hotels for many years. And it was a standard that when we cook steaks for our customers, we would brush a little bit of seasoned oil on top of the steak before we serve it to a customer. Meaning it could be a garlic oil, it could be a thyme, an herb oil, it could be something like that. And it did two things, two things. One was, it was a magical flavor with the oil because it seeps into the meat. The meat's already flavorful because of salt and pepper and it's Certified Angus Beef, but now you've added another layer of flavor which is fantastic. The other thing was, and I learned this in the takeout was the oil separated the condensation, the steam from the takeout.

Tony Biggs:

So when I opened my packaging up from a steak that we actually brushed oil, there was no steam on top or very, very little. It wasn't fresh by all means, but there wasn't that steam that you get from a takeout, so I recommend that. The other thing I recommend is and my dad taught me this. I'm going back from experience here folks, that why do people sell a four ounce filet mignon, at half an inch thick when you're going to get it well done. Just serve a two to three ounce thick steak charge for it, cook it right, take it home and you can have a doggy bag when you get home. Do it, do it right. Do that steak right. So I've always been a proponent... I know people want a four ounce steak and it's portion control and la-da-da. But when you want a really great steak, you're going to cut that about two to three, right Bryan, you know it. Two to three inches thick, you're going to cook that medium rare salt and pepper. You're going to have a great experience.

Bryan Schaaf:

Well, and like anything else it's all about building a layer of insurance, a layer of insulation against overcooking. The thicker the steak, the greater degree of, I guess, air you've bought yourself, right?

Tony Biggs:

Exactly. Exactly. These were great tips. When you focus on really take out especially, I felt that these restaurants didn't pay enough attention to how their steak was dressed as well. When you dress for a party Bryan, what do you? You put your tuxedo on, you go to the part, you looking like a million bucks. Well, why can't you do that to a \$95 steak really honestly. Put some green, some watercress, a note, a sauce. When you go to Papa John's what do you get? You get the garlic butter, you get a couple of peppers, you remember those things, Bryan, don't you. So why not dress those stakes up that you have that people will remember, "Hey, I got a steak, but I got a baked onion that was unbelievable in the packaging that kept the steak warm and it was just magical."

Bryan Schaaf:

Yeah. And it's so subtle because average consumers aren't going to look at that and say, "Oh, that baked onion was obviously there to keep things warm." They're going to say, "Oh, that was delicious." You get to play both sides of the coin. It's functional and it's also additive to the entire dish you're pushing out.

Tony Biggs:

Exactly. You said it.

Bryan Schaaf:

So if you're keeping track at home, the big three takeaways would appear take care of your packaging. Don't just throw it in a clamshell, don't just wrap it up. Make sure that whenever you are pushing your steaks out it has some sort of ventilation. And also if it's got the little grates at the bottom to keep it off the juices, oil is a great protective barrier to finish your steaks with before they go in. And you're going to have more success with thicker steaks as opposed to thinner. One of our old meat scientists Phil Bass always used to say that there are two degrees to have done this for thinly sliced steaks, raw and cremated. So the thicker the better, right?

Tony Biggs:

The thicker the better. You know and I know.

Bryan Schaaf:

But let's be clear, you can take all the precautions in the world to give people a great steak eating experience via takeout, it's still never going to be the same. It's one of those things that's so difficult to replicate. You can't replicate the ambience, you can't replicate service. You can't replicate all of those unbelievable things that make dining out so, so special. So all these tips aside that we're talking to chefs and restaurant owners about. If you are a home cook, if you are a consumer, we will also plead with you, give these folks a little slack because they're doing their damndest to give you the best experience that they can. And it's COVID so be kind.

Tony Biggs:

Half steak will travel Bryan. Half steak will travel.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's going to be my next tattoo. Outstanding on that note, chef, anything else you want to drop in?

Tony Biggs:

Yeah. I got one more thing. I actually have a friend that is a DoorDasher, and I actually went on a couple of DoorDashing routes. And I was dressing my Bill Belichick hoodie that I always wear. And nobody recognized me and I did some DoorDashing and it was just... It was an enlightening experience, it really was. Getting from A to Z for a DoorDasher is a challenge. And to get there on time and to get orders, not just steaks, but you're talking about tuna or sushi or a burger, and Chipotle. Getting to your destination in a timely manner, they grade you for that actually. So in defense of those carriers, it was eye-opening, it was eyeopening. So I have a lot of respect.

Bryan Schaaf:

That's interesting. Well, there's got to be a certain level of trust on both sides there as well because if you're a chef, the DoorDash it doesn't work for you. There's an aspect of really taking a leap of faith and saying, "I trust that you're going to... This is Frodo returning to the ring to the mountain."

Tony Biggs:

The one good thing about DoorDash that I saw was once you get an order, if there is a place that another order beeps on your phone on the way, not out of your way, you have a timeframe to get that order to a customer. There's a timeframe and they let the customer know that. And so if you have, like I said, if you have another order that dings end and you're on the way to that destination, that final destination. You can pick up that order and serve two orders. But they will never ever send you Southwest, Northeast and mishandle an order.

Bryan Schaaf:

Well put, well put. On that note, Chef Tony Biggs, just know if you are listening and you want to pick his brain a little bit. That's basically what he did during quarantine was he put on his disguise and he'd go into restaurants and... Because I think every restaurateur, whether they want to admit it or not really wants to know, "All right, what is somebody who is unbiased with no ax to grind who literally is just trying to look at what we're doing, and maybe give some helpful suggestions to make us better." What are they really experiencing when they see your operation? And that's a great thing the Abraham Lincoln costume that you put on, it kind of gives you a way I'm not going to lie.

Tony Biggs:

Hey, I want to say one more thing. Bryan, I think we built up a great audience and lots of people are reaching out for recipes. So feel free to reach out to me on Instagram, Chef Tony Biggs. I've spoken to a couple of people about some things we've talked about on this show and so keep it coming. Wow, it's kind of amazing. Love for the show, Bryan. So great job

Bryan Schaaf:

On that note, if this is your first time tuning into the Meat Speak Podcast, know that you can find us across all of your major podcasting platforms, including Apple, Google Play, Spotify, or simply by visiting the best option [certifiedangusbeef.com/podcast](https://certifiedangusbeef.com/podcast). It's the best because it's got our picture there chef, we're looking pretty good I'm not going to lie. We're going to print them off, like Tiger Beat magazine covers, and weekend barbecue enthusiasts are going to have us on their bedroom walls.

Tony Biggs:

What if we gained weight? And it doesn't look like the picture anymore? You know?

Bryan Schaaf:

See, I entered this thing already a little large and in charge. So I think I've bought myself a little insurance on that. So on that note, this is the Meat Speak Podcast powered by the Certified Angus Beef brand on behalf of Chef Tony Biggs on behalf of meat scientists, Diana Clark, who is not here this morning, she has her hands full with children. It's COVID right now. You do what you can. I'm Bryan Schaaf. We appreciate you taking time to tune in. And until next we'll see you all later.