

ATTITUDES OF MEAT BUYERS  
DALLAS EATING ESTABLISHMENTS  
TOWARD TEXAS FED BEEF.  
PRELIMINARY INTERVIEWS

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THE TEXAS AGRICULTURAL MARKET RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Summary

Research Objective

The following transcripts present the principal questions and answers from a series of exploratory interviews with meal buyers in selected Dallas eating establishments. The purpose is to obtain information for the design of a questionnaire to be used in a Dallas survey to obtain attitudes of meat buyers in eating establishments toward Texas fed-beef.

In addition to their impressions of Texas-fed beef, receptiveness to the concept of a promotion effort for Texas-fed steaks was tentatively explored. The Texas Cattle Feeders Association wishes to explore the possibilities of a promotion effort that would replace the "Kansas City" steak image with a "Texas-fed" steak image for excellence in steaks.

Establishments Included

The Dallas survey is to include major restaurants, major hotels and motels, leading cafeterias, private clubs and steak houses. Therefore, for the preliminary and exploratory interviews, a cross section of types of eating establishments was sought. Those where interviews were conducted included the following:

Adolphus Hotel  
Baker Hotel  
Steak House Unique  
Copper Cow  
Petroleum Club  
Cattleman's Restaurant  
Golden Steer Bar-B-Q

Efforts were made to conduct interviews at the Sheraton-Dallas and the Statler-Hilton hotels but these could not be arranged during the day concerned. Also, the Piccadilly Cafeteria meat buyer was not available. The buyer for Vick's was also missed as was the chef for the City Club of Dallas. The Chaparrel Club is catered through the Sheraton-Dallas hotel.

#### Highlights of Findings

A limited number of interviews provides an inadequate basis for conclusions as to the relative importance of particular buying practices, attitudes and operational methods. Looked for, instead, were variations in concepts that should be considered in designing the Dallas eating establishment survey. Those attitudes and operational methods, of interest, that emerged from the preliminary interviews are listed below.

1. The image of quality fed-beef being associated with the Mid-West still remains.
2. Some steak houses are still insisting on Mid-West beef.
3. Some steak houses now have an indifferent attitude toward the source of the beef. Texas fed-beef is equally accepted along with that from elsewhere.
4. Some buyers are not really knowledgeable about beef grade specifications as much as they should be. Buyers of meats are responsible for many other items as well and are not necessarily expected to have expertise on all products.
5. Considerable reliance on the H.R.I. supplier, or the packing house, still persists insofar as the responsibility of obtaining quality beef is concerned. The real decision on a) source of supply and b) position within grade and c) trim is left to the provision house used.
6. Pre-cut steaks are used for fillets and to some extent for other steaks.
7. Rib-eyes are purchased for use in cutting own steaks as well as top butts. Of those interviewed most cut their own steaks.

8. Rib-eyes, top butts and rounds desired varied somewhat in weight ranges. However, the complaint of some was that Texas-fed cattle were too small, too young and not enough finish. Some expressed the feeling of "warm-up" feeding rather than solid feeding as being perhaps a problem. Use of 30-60 days rather than feeding 60-90 days was the impression some had.
9. Frozen steaks are not very well liked because buyers are accustomed to judging meat quality on a chilled cut basis. These remains skepticism as to how beef was frozen and how long it has been frozen.
10. Frozen steaks are more of a problem than non-frozen ones insofar as cooking in or on broilers is concerned. If a grill is used, use of frozen steaks does not present a difficulty from the cooking viewpoint.
11. Vacuum packing is not looked upon favorably. Two factors appear to be involved. One is the preference to judge meat quality on a chilled carcass basis. The second is that the vacuum packed cuts bleed when opened and cause a clean-up problem.
12. Exterior trim on steaks or wholesale cuts, interestingly enough, is not a particular problem among any of those interviewed.
13. It is recognized that the term "KC steak" is used on menus and there is a Mid-West quality image created. However, some consider that this pertains more to steak quality identification rather than identifying source of the meat.
14. Most of those interviewed were of the opinion that Texas and beef are synonymous in the minds of many people, local or from out-of-state. Therefore, Texas and beef can be a good selling device, yet it may not be necessary, in their minds. It is possible, and it seemed in part, that buyers were thinking more of themselves and their concepts rather than the general public image.
15. Eating establishment operators are receptive to a Texas-Fed Beef promotion--some rather enthusiastically and others see its being helpful. A few feel it is all-right but perhaps not necessary.

How important the above aspects of the beef market are among eating establishments will become more evident from the final Dallas survey.

Useful material for the design of that survey was obtained.

An unexpected plus from the interviews was the offer to attend a session of the Dallas association of professional chefs, which includes a rather distinguished membership, such as the Chef for Braniff International Airlines, and have a round table discussion with them. Plans will be made to do so.

CATTLEMEN'S RESTAURANT

Rex Brewer, Meat Buyer

The Market Research Center at Texas A&M is interviewing meat buyers of major restaurants for the Texas Cattle Feeders Association. They, as you know, particularly out in West Texas, are doing a lot of cattle feeding. We have some new major packaging plants coming in. Therefore, we are interested in trying to find out a little about what people think about Texas fed beef versus the traditional idea of getting fed beef from the Midwest--Kansas City, Omaha, Sioux City, etc.

I would like to explore this a little with you because we are going to design a little questionnaire that we will use later to interview a sample of commercial restaurants and feeding establishments in town.

1. In your meat buying, for example, since you have a very high quality restaurant, do you use any particular specifications for the meat that you buy.

We do for our strips, tops, and rib-eyes. We used to bone our own meat and get it from Kansas City. Now we get our meat through Armour and it comes from Omaha. We have found that the Texas fed is not as good as the Northern beef.

The only thing I can figure out is that it would be from the difference in the corn, or whatever they feed them, that is better there than it is here in Texas. I know we shipped our calves up there and they fed them out.

2. Well, this has been the case in the past, and this is one reason we are interested in this, because it is a big change. That has been the pattern as you well know, but presently Texas is now the third ranking state in the nation in feeding cattle. So the picture is changing and that is the reason we are interested in the present situation.

Have you used any Texas steaks, to your knowledge, anytime recently?

Yes, we use them all the time. In my T-bones, there are all U.S.D.A. good and inspected Texas grown stuff.

3. Do you have a particular supplier that you use here?

My T-bones usually come from Mahetti Meat. My strips, our tops and our rib-eyes I get from Armour. I buy some rib-eye from Jack's Meats here and from Swifts. All T-bones from Jack's Meat for the two places here and for Ft. Worth I get them from Surperior in Ft. Worth.

I use choice tenders and I don't know where they come from. The choice tenders are skinned out and I just buy the steaks.

4. I am really not interested in your buying except that it may be useful in terms of evaluating some of the sources of suppliers. I am not familiar at this point with who is handling HR&I meats. Big packers have gone into the Panhandle area and they are shipping beef to California to New York, etc., but I am not sure of local suppliers.

Do you get ready cut steaks?

I do for my T-bones. I get them ready cut. For strips and tops, K-C's and top clubs, we cut our own steaks.

5. Do you buy wholesale cuts?

Yes, I buy the full strip and do my own cutting.

6. Do you buy any frozen steaks?

No frozen steaks.

7. Is there any way to know where steaks come from?

Armour's are stamped by grade, U.S. choice, and 2C means it comes out of Omaha.

8. What are the differences in Texas fed and other beef such as appearance?

Northern beef has more marble than Texas fed beef. Texas rib-eyes seem tough to me and do not have enough marbling. However, there are differences in choice grades.

9. I believe you said that you buy for here and in Ft. Worth.

Yes, I buy for all five of our places.

10. What size animal do you require to have good steaks?

About an 800 to 850 lb. animal. Top butt needs to be around 12 lbs. Strips around 15 lbs.

11. Are you concerned with or pay any attention to the breed of cattle?

No don't know breed, but the trouble here is that I can not get big enough cattle to buy anything much from Neuhoff. I do buy prime rib. I use 18-20 lb. prime rib. Of course they have their feeders down south of here.

12. Do you specify weight of ready cut T-bones?

Yes, 14 oz. T-bones have to come off of short loin of 12 to 14 lbs.

13. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations Texas meat feeders need to follow?

Trouble down here is the weight of the carcass. After they feed 60 to 90 days they want to get rid of them. Increase weight of carcass

120 day feed.

14. Do you specify amount of trim?

Yes, I get a finished trim on my strips and square on my tops. We try to have about 75 to 80 strips, 75 to 80 tops and around 100 rib-eyes on hand.

15. Is there any kind of aging that you require?

We require 4 weeks aging on heavy beef.

Do you have much storage here?

Have space only for handling current orders no more than a week in advance. We have 2 locations here in Dallas, one in Arlington, one in Ft. Worth plus the Farmer's Daughter in Ft. Worth.

16. What about promotion for Texas beef, would it be good?

It would be good. People think of Texas and steaks as being synonymous anyway. Would be a natural. However, we have to have a choice label. Beef must be tops in quality for we have to keep our reputation as a steak house.

COPPER COW

1. Do you have any particular kind of specification that you are using in buying meat that you get for steaks? Do you buy rounds as well?

No I don't buy any rounds. I buy some outside rounds. Roast-heavy calf outside roast, but for the steak I buy U.S. choice 10-14 lb. top butts.

2. Do you buy your steaks pre-cut?

No I cut them. I buy 8 1/2 in. length sirloin strips.

3. Do you cut those yourself?

I buy fillets already made. 8 oz. fillets and 5 oz. fillets. I buy cow rib-eyes that I make a sirloin steak out of.

- 3a. On these steaks you are buying U.S. choice. Where within the choice rank do you think this would fall, high, low, medium?

High choice.

4. Do you know where your beef is coming from, or do you have any idea, or does it make any difference if it is Midwest fed beef or Texas fed beef?

Well, a little better quality when it comes from the Midwest.

5. Do you particularly specify this necessarily when you buy?

Well, not necessarily because you see when I get the pieces like that I couldn't tell you whether it was Texas beef or Iowa beef because it is already packaged.

6. You didn't check the stamp so that you can tell what packing plant put it up?

Well a lot of it they claim comes from Dubdale Packing Co., I think that's Denver. The way I get these, the little fabrication places, purveyors, buy from Dubdale, Armour, or Swift. The small man companies buy from Dubdale.

7. What suppliers are you using instead of Armour?

Well, I buy from Armour, some from Neuhoff. Most pork I get from Armstrong.

8. What do you buy from Neuhoff?

I buy cow rib-eyes mostly.

9. These rib-eyes you are using for what?

Sirloin steaks (for lunchtime).

10. Well, cattle feeding in Texas has increased a lot lately, which is the reason we are interested in whether the meat fed in Texas meets the requirements.

In my experience I bought quite a few top butts from Neuhoff. The type of cattle he feeds now is a little too young. They are not heavy enough.

11. What weights are they?

Well, I don't buy very much from Neuhoff. They have to scrape around to get a 10 lb. cut. They got a lot of the 8 lb. but the 10 to 14 they hardly ever have because the cattle are not heavy enough. They are fed more like stockers and steers. They don't feed out any 2 or 3 year steers.

12. Well, of course to some extent they are feeding to satisfy food chains and housewives and they are not interested in big steaks.

Now for grocery stores I think Neuhoff might even be better because it's good meat and tender, smaller to get around whole round steak.

13. Do you think it would be helpful if the Texas Cattle Feeders--they have a tremendous cattle feeding industry in West Texas now and they are shipping cattle to California and New York--do you think it would be any help if they did a little advertising or promotion on Texas steaks, kind of like Kansas steaks?

Yes, I think it would.

14. I notice these cuts from Armour. Are those frozen?

They are fresh when I get them (he keeps his meat in a freezer).

15. Do you ever particularly buy frozen for convenience?

I'd rather have them fresh. I can tell more about them.

16. Do you ever cook steaks from the frozen state?

With the kind of broiler I use it doesn't work too good. If cooking on a grill, frozen steaks takes the same length of time on a grill as a fresh. No so, though, when I put frozen steaks in a broiler.

17. Do you get anything in a pre-cooked form?

No

18. What are your views about tenderizing?

I use one. One that I have been using for years. It tastes good, but most of the time they don't taste good. I use La Goo.

19. Is this liquid?

Yes.

20. Can you put it on a steak when you cook it?

Put it on when I cut the steaks, except for fillets. When I cook strips, like sirloins, served at lunch, cut in two and brush tenderizer on with water and let set overnight. Mix with a little oil. I sure enjoyed talking with you about this. We are going to do a little survey here in Dallas on this and we are trying to get some preliminary information.

21. I have mash cutters for veal cutlets. Only place around where you can get a fresh cutlet. They make a lot of these so-called cutlets called minute steaks. Some people use them. I don't ever use them. For chicken fried steaks I buy from another company that makes a nice U.S. good calf dinner size (round).

22. How long do you cook beef when you roast it?

About two and one half hours.

What temperature?

About 350°.

23. What weight ~~roast~~ do you use?

Heavy calf outsides.

STEAK HOUSE UNIQUE

Tommy Row

1. What we are interested in is the kind and type of beef you buy?  
We buy both Texas and Midwestern beef, according to price.
2. What grade to you buy?  
We specify choice.
3. How about aging, if any?  
We like to get 3 week aged beef.
4. What beef cuts do you buy?  
We buy a lot of top butts and cut steaks from it.
5. Are you buying any pre-cut?  
Some fillets and lady's strips.
6. Do you use frozen?  
No, I try to stay away from frozen. I don't know how long they've been frozen.
7. Take CRYOVAC, do you buy any packed that way?  
No, it gets real bloody.
8. Do you have any trouble with trim?  
No.
9. What size steaks do you serve?  
Use 8, 10, 12, 16, 20 oz. fillets, strips, chateau. I've decided it pays to buy the best.
10. What is your opinion of Texas cattle feeders going into market promotion of Texas fed steaks?  
I think the average man on the street thinks he is eating Texas fed steak anyway. I think it would be a waste of time. I don't think it would change what restaurants serve.

GOLDEN STEER BAR-B-Q

1. What grade of beef do you usually bar-b-que and what kind of cuts?

Naval end plates (first seven ribs). Buy best grade can buy.

2. Is this bought by any kind of grade?

I buy the best I can buy. Beef steaks and a lot of it I get from Swift.

3. We are doing a survey among the restaurants and we are primarily talking to steak houses, cafeterias where they have beef rounds. We are doing this go get some information for the Texas Cattle Feeders. They are interested in what kind of beef the people who are in the eating establishment business would like to have.

4. Mr. Bailey wanted to know why beef is not as good as it used to be. He says it's too watery now. Does not get good steaks either.

5. We are interested in the steaks in particular and what the differences are between Texas fed steaks and the Midwest fed steaks. We haven't been a major feeding state long, but there are some major feeders down here now. A big complex in the Panhandle area is tied in with major packing plants.

I have not had a good steak in the last 12 years. I buy the best though.

6. Do they have a grade stamped on this meat when you get it?

Yes, it's supposed to be U.S. good choice. Feels like some meat should be a different grade.

7. There is a lot of variation in choice. The food stores, for example, sell choice meat bit it's really what we call low choice. Barely choice.

I need firmer and tastier meat. During the weekdays, I have an average of 200-225 people a day in the restaurant.

8. Do you ever get any good meat from Texas Meat here in Dallas?

Yes, I have used Swift, Texas, Neuhoff, Armstrong and about all of them.

9. We are interested because the bar-b-que food business is a major food business and we would like to get more information so we can be more helpful to you. Thank you very much.

Adolphus Hotel

Mr. Moore

1. What specifications do you use on beef buying? Are you using fresh or frozen beef and pre-cut steaks? We buy a little bit of everything. We buy beef rounds, choice, square cut, 40-50 lbs; club steaks, choice 6 oz.-8oz. pre-cut; sirloin steaks, 6-oz., choice.
2. Are they (sirloins) pre-cut too? Yes
3. Do you get these (steaks and rounds) locally? Yes, Texas Meat Co. or Morrell and so on.
4. Do you specify if Mid-west beef or local beef? No, just as long as it is choice.
5. On the rounds, I guess you get them fully trimmed? Yes, square cut, 40-50 pounds.
6. What grade of round do you get? Choice
7. Since you are using pre-cuts are you using any frozen at all? We use them quite a bit, if or when we get a good price on them. The veal cutlets usually come frozen.
8. Do you have enough freezer space to hold them frozen? Yes, we have a big walk-in box.
9. Do you have any idea about what size carcass these rounds come from? No, just know weight or size we want.
10. How about trim; do you specify any trim? We just buy choice.
11. No, I mean exterior trim. No, we just buy 8 oz., 6 oz., 7 oz., whatever it is.
12. Do you also supply the King's Club here in the hotel? Yes.
13. How about the club on top of the Adolphus Tower (City Club)? No, they supply their own.
14. What do you supply in prime grade? We never get prime. Prime is best grade but it has too much fat.

## Adolphos Cont'd.

15. Would you say that you buy low, meduim or high choice? We just buy choice.
16. In a hotel like this, is there any problem in or would there be any help in promoting Texas beef? We get beef at times, or used to, from Kansas City, but I think the Texas beef or beef bought locally is just as good.
17. Do you have any order forms you use so I would know the different items you buy? No, do not use those anymore.
18. Do you have any public eating places here in the hotel? Yes one. But the Cheffette is a separate business operation and not ours.
19. Do you require any particular aging for beef? No.

BAKER HOTEL

Mr. Shepherd

1. Are you buying any ready cut steaks?

Yes.

2. Do you buy frozen for back up supply?

No.

3. Do you make any specification to where beef comes from?

No, we try to get Northern beef if we can get it, but you do not always know. A lot of beef is fed right here in Texas and I am sure we get it too. Unless has the number on it, you don't know.

5. Do you have any particular specifications on aging?

Yes, 3-4 weeks.

6. Who are your particular suppliers?

We buy from all of them, Texas, Swift, Armour, you know.

7. What size steaks do you buy?

We buy 8 oz. strip, mostly. Sometimes we get 10 oz. and 12 oz. It depends on how much they want to pay. Buy 5 oz. top butt steaks, sometimes 6 oz. or 8 oz.

8. Think promotion on Texas fed would help?

I don't think it makes any difference to feed beef up there or down here.

9. Do you get good marbling on meat you buy?

Yes very good marbling.

10. Do you order ahead by the week or how?

Buy day to day.

11. Are there any particular changes in the way beef is put up that would help you?

No, no changes.

12. What is the situation for meat tenderizers?

Doesn't use tenderizer because feels that good steak doesn't need it.

13. Have you used primal cuts in vacuum pack?

Used it (vacuum-pack), but doesn't like it much. I don't particularly care for it myself because if you take it out it bleeds in thaw box. I'd rather have my meat fresh and dry.

PETROLEUM CLUB

Mr. Flewellen

1. What kind of specifications are you using for buying beef?

I find that for many years I have left it to my purveyor. I pick a good purveyor to start with and give him the weights of strips, eye, size 9 in. I use, weight of ribs. I use 32-35 lb. ribs and I break the ribs down myself.

I know a little bit about beef after so many years as a cook. I use aged beef here which causes me to trim.

2. How much aging.

I use 3-4 weeks on loins, strips and ribs.

3. Do you buy pre-cut?

No we cut our own. I buy 15 lb strips. That's the size that appeals to me. Veal—I don't buy too much, mostly broken down by veal cutlets, fresh veal bought from Cash Bros.

I buy pork products and butter from Armour. I buy poultry and eggs from Grubbs.

4. Do you buy any rounds?

Yes I used two rounds here yesterday. I run them on roasting. I use quite a few pickled and corned rounds which are pumped.

5. How long do you cook a round?

Those yesterday came just about perfect. I cook them at 400° about 9 hours.

6. Do you use a rotisserie?

No, I've never used one. I boil a pickled round 5-6 hours and then put in oven about 4 hours. Takes 10-11 hours. I only expect to get about 2/3 yield on rounds because after that they get fibrous or tough.

7. Do use choice?

I use nothing below choice, but mainly choice and prime. I guess I spend about \$100,000 on beef a year. That's a pretty good buying power.

No customer complaints in a year here at the Club. I pay no attention to where beef is fed unless I get a complaint. Occasionally will send something to supplier that I do not like from visual inspection. Buy from one packer who is local. I buy from Gourmet Meat. Have shopped around but don't like others. Look for quality first.