

# A Chef's View

1:00 p.m. session, Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2005

Presenter: Chef Victor Matthews Jr., Black Bear Restaurant

RAPID CITY, S.D. (Dec. 6, 2005) — Chef Victor Matthews Jr., who owns and operates the Black Bear Restaurant near Colorado Springs, Colo., offered Range Beef Cow symposium attendees a candid look at what his restaurant patrons want from beef. In short, Matthews said, consumers want information.



**Chef Victor Matthews, Jr., of Colorado's Black Bear Restaurant shared what he has learned about consumer beef preferences. [PHOTO BY LYNN GORDON]**

"Customers want to know what they are eating and where it came from," said Matthews, who has conducted more than 1,000 blind taste tests to help identify which beef is best. He's found that consumers like marbling. They like flavor. But what they like best of all is information.

"If you can tell them a story about their food, what it's about, they appreciate that," he said, adding it applies both to wine and to beef. "The No. 1 selling point for food products is information — the story of where the food came from."

Matthews calls it a revolution of information. Ten years ago, he said, few people asked questions about food. Now, nightly in his restaurant a half-dozen patrons will ask questions about everything from the beef to the wine.

"I think this is good, and it is an indicator of the need for ID (identification) and the information it can help provide," Matthews added.

"I appreciate what you do," Matthews said, acknowledging that what farmers and ranchers do daily to produce food is undoubtedly a difficult challenge. "Thank you for giving us the information and quality."

He added, "You can tell the difference in a piece of meat on your plate that someone cared about and [one] someone didn't. You can tell when someone is doing the right thing."

Matthews revealed that from the 1,000 taste tests he's conducted with consumers, the winner was the beef produced by small-scale American farmers or ranchers. "So, you win," he told the audience.

In his quest to help educate other chefs about where quality food products — particularly beef — originate, Matthews has started the Paragon Culinary School to train other chefs.

“Keep up the good work,” he concluded. “Every year there’s going to be more people who appreciate what you’re doing. They didn’t appreciate you a few years ago, but I’m going to fix that,” he said of his efforts with his school.

For more about Matthews’ restaurant and school visit [www.blackbearrestaurant.com](http://www.blackbearrestaurant.com) or <http://www.paragonculinaryschool.com>.

— by Kindra Gordon, field editor, Angus Productions Inc.  
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