

Beef from Nebraska has star power!

Beef from Nebraska is renowned for its high quality and flavor. Now, beef from Nebraska is starring as the main ingredient in a MasterChef Indonesia cooking competition, with help from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA).

The fourth most populated nation in the world, Indonesia has experienced rapid economic growth in recent years.

“Building on the strong foundation for trade between the U.S. and Indonesia, a high visibility show like

MasterChef can help expand the market for Nebraska beef producers,” said Jon Kerrigan, NDA international trade team representative.

Nebraska was the first state to send a representative to Indonesia to examine beef regulations and promote beef after two years of travel restrictions because of COVID. Kerrigan said that Nebraska made an impression on the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia putting us in the right place at the right time when MasterChef called.



Since travelling to Indonesia more than a year ago, NDA has been in frequent touch with the U.S. Embassy, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, the Nebraska Beef Council, the Nebraska Corn Board, and many others working to get beef from Nebraska featured in MasterChef, according to Kerrigan.

“A previous season of the popular television program MasterChef featured seafood from Alaska, a show that received millions of views,” said Kerrigan. “We knew right away that we were being given an amazing opportunity to highlight beef from Nebraska, and we put together the perfect team to make it happen.”

“We needed a ranching family to tell the story about our state’s beef industry and how Nebraska ranchers produce some of the best beef in the world,” said Kerrigan. “People want to know where their beef comes from, and beef from Nebraska comes from families who care about their animals and the environment.”

Matt Allen and his wife Audra were asked to represent Nebraska ranchers on the show, and they stepped up in a big way. The family owns and operates Whitewater Ranch, a seven-generational ranch founded in 1884 and located in the Nebraska Sandhills. The Allen’s opened the show by sharing stories of ranch

life in Nebraska and how ranchers raise high quality, great tasting beef.

Even though Audra and her husband needed some convincing to go to Indonesia, they are so glad that they went.

“The show was taped in August, and we didn’t want to miss our kids competing at the county fair,” she explained. “We were encouraged and persuaded by our ranching friends and family to go to Indonesia. They said they could watch over and assist our children at the fair, but they were unable to travel overseas. In the end, we went to Indonesia to be a voice for Nebraska ranchers and highlight beef from Nebraska.”



“We were so thankful for the chance to travel to Indonesia and appear on MasterChef,” said Audra. “We were guests in their country, and we represented Nebraska and our western culture by trying to be humble, kind, and respectful.”

“I can’t say enough positive things for the opportunity we were given,” said Audra. “The competition was difficult at times due to the heat and humidity, but it was even more fulfilling than we anticipated. If Nebraska can be the state that is getting our name out there, that’s important.”

According to Audra, seeing for themselves how Nebraska-produced beef is selling in Indonesian supermarkets and restaurants gave her and her husband more faith in their capacity to raise Indonesia’s market share for commercial beef from Nebraska.

MasterChef Indonesia, like other cooking competitions, challenges participants in a variety of ways. This particular show featured another well-known ambassador of beef from Nebraska, and that was University of Nebraska Professor Emeritus Chris Calkins. Calkins is a long-time advocate of beef from Nebraska and has traveled around the world promoting Nebraska beef products.

“I’ve done a lot of demonstrations using beef from Nebraska, but I’ve never been on a reality T.V. show

before,” said Calkins. “I always say that if you could invent the perfect place to raise high quality beef, you’d invent a place that has abundant resources, the best land for grazing, plenty of water, wide open spaces, and ample corn for feed. You’d invent Nebraska. I love to travel and tell the story about beef from Nebraska because it’s a story based in fact, and it’s a fantastic story to tell. Beef from Nebraska is high quality. It’s a product that performs.”

Calkins demonstrated to MasterChef participants the correct way to cut a flat iron steak. A flat iron steak is a flavorful, versatile steak cut with the grain, from the chuck, or shoulder of the animal. Flat iron steaks can be cooked in several different ways and are great to use in recipes like stir-fries, salads, stews, and fajitas.

The 29 participants (amateur and home chefs) who started the MasterChef Indonesia competition were asked to cut a flat iron steak the way Calkins showed them, which was a challenge itself. Bogor, Indonesia, where the show was recorded, is located near the equator, making it difficult to cut beef under the sun on a hot, humid day.

Participants then created a variety of food using beef from Nebraska. Calkins said he was impressed with the diversity of the dishes, and Audra said that each of the contestants did a fabulous job preparing different and delicious dishes using flat iron steaks.

Many people and organizations worked together to make this MasterChef Indonesia show possible including the U.S. Embassy, the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, the Nebraska Beef Council, and the Nebraska Corn Board. The Fort in Lincoln donated cowboy hats that were presented to the celebrity chefs judging the competition.

The U.S. Embassy in Indonesia has already received many comments from people saying it is their most favorite episode by far.

Nebraska beef is always a star around the world and so are our beef producers! MasterChef is such a popular program in Indonesia. It has the potential to reach a huge audience. Special thanks to beef from Nebraska ambassadors Matt and Audra Allen and Chris Calkins.

The MasterChef Indonesia episode featuring beef from Nebraska aired Sept. 2.

Here is the link to watch:

[MasterChef Indonesia Season 11, episode 3](#)

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