

From Texas to the Kremlin

Tom Perini and John E. Dudley are home for the holidays after a successful cooking jaunt to Russia. ■ By J.T. Smith

When you think of Christmas and the holiday season, great food and goodwill always come to mind.

Tom Perini is glad to be back home to Buffalo Gap, Texas, (population 600) and Perini Ranch for the holidays, but the ambassador for U.S. beef will not forget his latest trip abroad during the fall to promote American meat.

Renowned chuck wagon cook Perini and Texas Beef Council (TBC) Chairman John E. Dudley made the jaunt to Russia as part of a beef market development program conducted by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) and TBC.

Perini and Dudley conducted three seminars in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and appeared on a Russian television cooking show. Perini told how to cook great beef. Rancher Dudley explained how to produce it.

“On Russian television, we cooked T-bones, rib-eye and I showed them how to do dry rubs — and how not to overcook the meat,” Perini notes.

Perini and Dudley used their expertise to develop the image of U.S. beef as high-quality product, and one that is affordable to Russian importers, processors, restaurant operators and chefs.

The two Texans reached 120 Russian buyers with their seminars. Among those in attendance were the executive chef and his assistants from the Kremlin, the citadel that houses the office of the Russian government,



including President Vladimir Putin.

Perini already had cooked beef tenderloin for President Putin last spring when Putin met with U.S. President George W. Bush at his Crawford, Texas, ranch. Putin had exclaimed (via Russian translator) the Perini cuisine was the best beef he had ever eaten anywhere in the entire world. Perini had then immediately quipped: “Mr. President, would you *repeat* that, please?”

Months later, influential members of the Russian food service trade showed up this fall to hear Perini — this time in *their* country — discussing the U.S. beef that already had so impressed their country’s leader.

Perini told them U.S. beef provides high-quality tenderness and flavor for all audiences whether they eat at the Kremlin or at the corner coffee shop or a local restaurant.

Perini taught the Russian trade some options for beef cuts like brisket, knuckle, ball tip, and his world-acclaimed tenderloin, along with the T-bone and rib-eye.

“Much of the Russian cuisine involves boiling or overcooking beef from older dual-purpose cows,” Perini notes. “The Russian chefs and meat buyers did not realize that grain-fed cuts from young U.S. calves selected for beef traits could be flavorful and juicy.”

TEACHING OTHERS OUR SYSTEM

Dudley, a registered and commercial cattle producer at Comanche, Texas, gave background of U.S. beef production. He recalls the Russian trade was impressed with the American beef producers’ system for generating good marbling to add flavor and juiciness to U.S. beef cuts.

“They were interested in the large picture of the U.S. beef industry and how we go through the system to produce grain-fed beef,” Dudley notes. “They gave our message a great reception.”

USMEF began developing this region in the early 1990s using a combination of beef checkoff dollars and government Market Access Program funds. USMEF foreign directors and consultants generated programs and contacts to build awareness and demand for U.S. beef in Russia and other independent states of the former Soviet Union.

RUSSIA IS BIG CUSTOMER

Russia has become the U.S. beef industry’s fourth largest customer. Through August 2002, Russian had purchased 50,026 metric tons of beef and beef variety meats worth \$43.2 million. That’s 26% growth in volume and 43% in value over the previous year.

Dudley says Russia typically has purchased U.S. beef variety meats, but has shown a greater interest in beef cuts as Russia per capita income grows.

“If the Russian economy continues to expand, I think the potential for U.S. beef in that market is unlimited,” Dudley observes. ♦