



Using Alternative Cuts of Beef

Most restaurants put the most expensive cuts of meat on their menu. Sirloin, Tenderloin, and Rib-eye are easy to make tender and sell very well. But, their cost makes it difficult to actually make a profit on the dish.

Take Beef Tenderloin, for instance. An 8 ounce piece of IBP Center Cut Select Tender costs about \$7.00. *This may sound high, but if you do an actual yield test on a whole peeled tender starting at \$7.00 per pound, this is the end cost of that 8 ounce steak.)*

If you add a few dollars for extras on the plate, add a salad, and you'd have to sell that dish for over \$30.00 to make a decent food cost. Few places can command such prices.

It is much more professional to take less expensive food items and turn them into high priced goods. For instance, your average baker takes plain old flour, sugar and butter, and turns these plebian items into delicious, flaky croissants. Flour is about 30¢ a pound, Sugar 50¢, and Butter is about \$1.60 a pound. Good Croissants sell for \$4.00 a pound. There's a lot of skill involved, but there's good money to be made.

When creating a menu, it is important to emphasize those items which are less expensive, either at that time of year or just in general. If you can market these items well, you can run a profit on your menu. The items to look for now are Chicken, Pork, Shrimp,

Tilapia and alternative cuts of Beef. Avoid the items which are running high, even though these may be what your customers are looking for. Chicken Wings, for instance, are close to double the price of Chicken Breast. You may have to sell wings, but you really need to back them up with a chicken breast dish to actually make some money.

Alternative cuts of beef are worth looking into. They are readily available and recipes are all over the internet. It is more technique than recipe which is important.

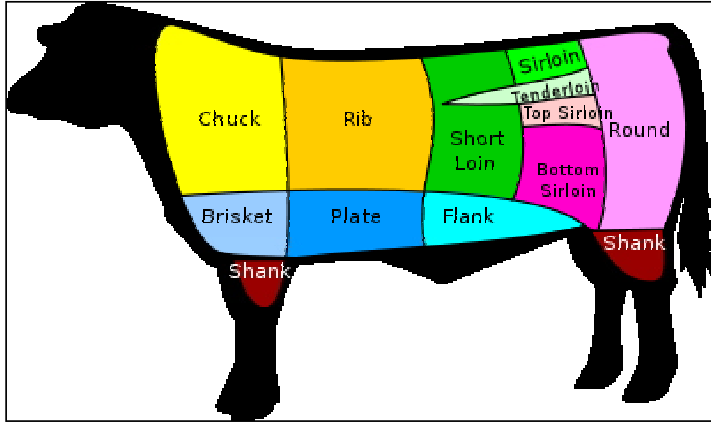
Most require braising or other slow cooking methods, which does take some skill. But this means that they can be made once a week or on a regular schedule on a slow day and just need to be reheated. This can make life easier on a busy Saturday.

With a little imagination, a decent sauce and superior cooking techniques, a good cook can take cuts such

as Flat Iron, Coulotte, or Short Ribs, and put out a \$20.00 plate with a manageable food cost. Please note the emphasis on the words "superior cooking techniques". This is not the sort of entrée that can be quickly made up at a chain restaurant by an inexperienced "Chef". Now a very good Chef can use these same cuts of meat, prepare, sauce and market this inexpensive plate for \$30.00 and a very low food cost. This is also the sort of item which can place your Proudly Independent Restaurant ahead of the competition, with signature and unique dishes.



Each of the following cuts of beef have their own peculiarities, and certain cooking methods work better than others. If they are thought of as cheap meat, then the plate will be a cheap plate. But, if you look at each cut of meat as a challenge, and a reason to try to make the best dish from whatever you have on hand, you can create a masterpiece.



FLAT IRON STEAK – From the Chuck, available in stock as pre-cut 5 or 8 oz. steaks or as a whole item. The whole piece has a section of fat on the top to trim, but it is easy to work. This cut includes the Teres Major and another large muscle, which can be called Top Blade Steak. This is a tender cut that is very flavorful and easy to prepare. Marinate lightly and grill for sliced steak. 59587, 59589 & 59298

SHORT RIBS - From the Chuck, this cut of meat definitely requires some skills to be able to prepare and market. However if done well, it can make the reputation of any restaurant, and can be sold at a great profit. They are braised and require a few hours of cooking time. A band saw or good meat saw may be needed to cut to size. 59448 & 59450

TERES MAJOR – Also from the Chuck. These are great, very tender pieces that have a myriad of uses. They can be as tender as tenderloin and are much more flavorful, as the cow uses this muscle much more often. The Teres Major comes in bags of about 10# each, with about 12 pieces per bag. There is a miniscule little piece of silverskin on each side of the cut and no fat to trim, making this piece is almost 100% usable. It perhaps is the least expensive good cut of meat there is. It also does not shrink, even under high heat. It may be served as a single steak or served as a sliced steak. 5950

HANGER STEAK - This is a pretty ugly piece of meat from under the ribeye, next to the skirt steak. It is called many names, like Butcher's Tenderloin and Bistro Steak, and is a very tender, flavorful piece of meat. It is about one pound per piece and has a tough membrane down the middle which is easy to remove, making two 8 ounce pieces. 59340

SKIRT STEAK – From the plate section, also called Romanian Steak or Philadelphia Steak. This long thin piece of meat is about 2# each, and has a membrane on each side that is relatively easy to remove. The best way I've seen to prep the skirt is to open a bag (about 11#), which will have 6 or so pieces. Pull the membrane off of each side, and

season the steak lightly. Roll it up whole, put in a hotel pan, marinate, and cover well. This way it will not dry out. Either serve as a whole steak, cooked very hot, or as a sliced steak, or as sliced meat for a fajita. 59457

BALL TIP SIRLOIN – From the Top Sirloin, this is one of many pieces of meat that can legitimately be called sirloin on the menu, but is relatively inexpensive. From our fresh cut meat sheet, for example, this cut is about \$5.50 per pound. It can resemble a tenderloin steak, but is tougher, and really cannot be used in the same way. It is generally pounded or pinned, marinated and grilled on a char grill. 59250, 59255

COULOTTE STEAK – Also from the Top Sirloin, this is a very versatile cut of beef. It can be bought any size, at about \$7.70 per pound, and can be served as a Sirloin Steak right from the broiler or grill. It should be cooked and served soon after purchase or frozen immediately, as it does get a "liver" taste as it ages.

AUSSIE TENDERS – These are not always available, but are very popular with some of our customers. It is a grass fed meat, so it is darker and more flavorful than the grain fed US Western beef we generally see. It should be cooked soon after cutting or frozen directly, as it will get very dark on the edges very quickly. If you get your customers used to this meat or sauce it correctly, you can definitely save a few dollars. 59512

FLANK STEAK – from the Flank, of course, this was a very cheap cut of meat until "London Broil" was invented. It is not so cheap these days, especially after trimming. Stuffed Braised Flank Steak is a nice alternative, but London Broil or sliced steak sandwiches are the main use for this product. 59290 & 59292

BRISKET – for my money, this is the king of alternative beef cuts. It is not as cheap as it looks (\$2.12 a pound this week) because there is a lot of fat to be trimmed and some shrinkage. Braised Brisket can run the gamut from great Diner food to high end restaurant and please all sorts of customers. The braising and sauce are critical, but trimming and slicing are of equal importance. 59220

The best menu is one that works with your kitchen, your dining room staff, your customers, and also generates enough profit to make the business worthwhile. It is good to look at all sorts of alternatives in menu planning, to keep the customer happy, and to keep the books in the black.

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