



**SOUTH DAKOTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION**



# **Family Moo News**

## **Adopt-A-Cow: Beef Lesson 1 – Beef’s Impact on South Dakota**

### **Beef Contributions to South Dakota**

South Dakota (SD) is home to 3,550,000 head of cattle and ranks 7th in the United States for number of cattle (USDA NASS, 2025). In 2020, the US Census recorded that 886,667 people called the state home, which means there are approximately 4 head of cattle per person! Cattle have shaped South Dakota history since the 1870s. Cattle were brought to the area from Texas in pursuit of abundant grasslands and fresh water. Beef was also in demand in the Dakota Territory to feed the military, Native Americans on the reservations, and those looking to strike it rich during the gold rush. Harsh winters prompted the end of the open range and brought in the idea of creating fences to keep cattle contained. In 2021, agriculture contributed an equivalent to 11.7 billion dollars to the total added wealth to the SD Economy. The beef industry contributed just over 1 billion dollars (2021 Economic Contribution Study). The SD beef industry will continue to play a critical role to the state's economy with numerous jobs and added value.



### **Selecting Beef at the Store**

Wherever you get your beef, whether that be at a grocery store, local butcher shop, or directly from a producer, there are some things you should know about selecting beef. First off, the diet that cattle receive during the finishing phase of production has a large impact on the final flavor of a cut of beef. Many cattle in the US are finishing on a high grain diet, also known as grain finished. Grass-fed or grass-finished beef is gaining in popularity and generally will be labeled as such. Grass-fed beef tends to be leaner, have more yellow colored fat, and the lean can have a darker appearance. The flavor and aroma between these two finishing methods also differs with grass-fed beef having an earthier or gamier flavor and aroma profile when compared to grain finished.

When purchasing beef from the grocery store or a butcher shop you may see words like Prime, Choice, or Select printed on the packaging. These words refer to the quality grade of that cut of beef. Quality grades are determined by a USDA grader and are an estimate of the quality of the eating experience. A quality grade refers to the amount of marbling, or flecks of fat within the muscle, that are present. Prime cuts have the greatest amount of marbling followed by Choice and then Select. These 3 quality grades are what is most common in retail cases.

### **Kids Can Cook Recipe: Barbeques**

**Recipe from:** Tyler Knutson, Brookings County  
2024 4-H Special Foods Contest

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 pound Ground Beef
- ½ cup Diced Onion
- 1 Tablespoon Brown Sugar
- 2 Tablespoons Vinegar
- ½ teaspoon Dry Mustard
- ¾ cup Ketchup
- 2 Tablespoons Flour

#### **Directions**

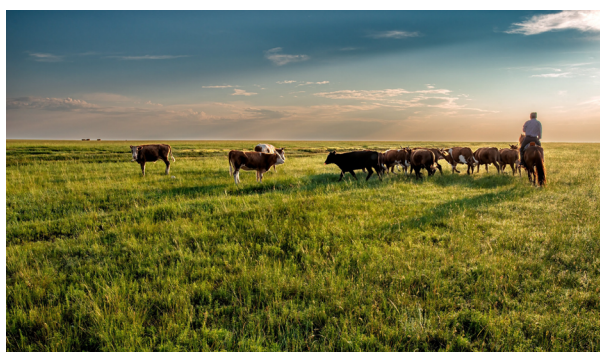
1. Brown meat and onion.
2. Add all other ingredients.
3. Simmer about 20 minutes.
4. Serve between bun halves.

# Ask me what I did today!

Today we started a new program called Adopt-A-Cow: Beef!

## What is it?

The “Adopt-A-Cow” program engages youth in learning about animal agriculture through hands-on activities and by connecting youth virtually with real South Dakota animals.

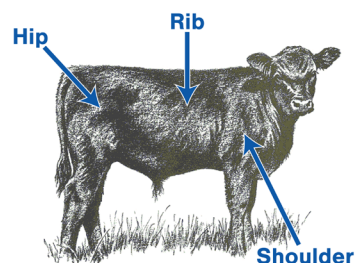


## Today we ...

Learned about how beef cattle impacted the formation of South Dakota.

AND

Designed our own unique cattle brands.



Original image courtesy of American Angus Association.

## Did you know?

The average American consumes 59.1 pounds of beef per year.

Not only is beef an important part of the human diet, but it is also a major part of the South Dakota economy.

South Dakota has nearly 3.45 million head of beef cattle; that is about four beef animals for every person in SD.



## South Dakota Beef Facts

- In the early 1890's Belle Fourche was the largest shipping point in the world.
- Dupree, Lemmon, Murdo, and Philip were all named after cattlemen.
- SD ranks 5th for beef cow and calf inventory and 7th for total number of cattle.
- Check out this virtual beef escape room

