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Cargill unveils new state of steak report

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Cargill released its first-ever â??State of Steak â?? Foodservice Editionâ?• report, a comprehensive look at how consumer expectations for steak are evolving across the foodservice landscape. Built on new proprietary research, the report highlights the emotional and economic significance of steak â?? and the growing pressures on operators to get it right.

â??Steak is more than just a protein â?? itâ??s a signal of quality, indulgence and experience,â?• said Glendon Taylor, Marketing Director for Cargillâ??s North American Food Business. â??Our research shows that steak can be a business driver for restaurants, but only if it consistently delivers on expectations like doneness, tenderness and presentation. Thatâ??s why understanding the guest mindset is critical.â?•

To help operators navigate these shifting expectations, the report dives into the specific factors shaping todayâ??s steak experience â?? from changing consumer preferences and definitions of quality to the operational challenges restaurants face in delivering consistently exceptional steak. Here are some of the most impactful insights revealed by the report:

The â??Steaksâ?• Are High: One in four steak consumers reported being dissatisfied with their last restaurant steak â?? citing issues with doneness, cut availability, or inconsistent quality. In todayâ??s competitive landscape, where experience is the #1 driver of restaurant choice, missing the mark on steak is a missed opportunity for loyalty.

Brands Should Raise the â??Steaksâ?• on Menu Development: The report found that guests gravitate toward the â??Big Fourâ?• steak cuts â?? ribeye, sirloin, filet, and New York strip â?? and increasingly want menu clarity and flexibility. Foodservice operators that clearly label grades, offer recognisable cuts and provide steak in a range of formats are better positioned to meet evolving expectations and maximise menu performance.

Steak Carries an Emotional Power: Whether itâ??s a celebration, indulgence, or reward, steak holds deep meaning for diners. The report encourages operators to align menu messaging, format and pricing with emotional need states â?? and to position

steak as a premium everyday indulgence, not just a special-occasion splurge.

Cargillâ??s research points to several clear opportunities for foodservice operators looking to elevate the steak experience. Training both front- and back-of-house teams is essential â?? from servers who can confidently guide guests through cuts and doneness levels, to chefs who consistently deliver on flavour, texture and visual presentation. Menus should feature the most popular cuts, highlight quality cues like USDA grade and â??no artificial ingredients,â? and offer flexibility in sizing and formats to appeal to a wider range of guests. And because steak is often tied to special occasions for consumers, restaurants can unlock additional value by pairing the steak experience with timely promotions or messaging that taps into celebration, indulgence or comfort.