

# RETAIL INTELLIGENCE ROAST BEEF

Think roast beef is just too traditional to be hip with today's consumers? Think again! Research into the consumer "hot-buttons" for roast beef indicate roast beef is just as relevant for today's busy households as always. Retailers who embrace the category stand to see a big boost to their bottom line.

## The BIG Business of Beef

No question—beef is big business in this country. From some 83,000 farms and ranches across Canada, more than 3.5 billion pounds of beef are produced each year. Canadians consume a whole lot of beef. In fact, beef is the most popular protein in the retail fresh meat section, representing 39% of fresh meat sales dollars or, to put it another way, it's worth \$2.2 billion.

And when it comes to beef roasts, Canadians are adding around \$340 million worth to their shopping carts annually. Beef roasts are high margin items,

accounting for 15.6% of the retail beef market. And while this is a healthy chunk of the business, clearly, there's still plenty of room for growth.

It's certainly easy to make a business case for roast beef; not only is it worth considerable sales dollars, it also offers grocers a great opportunity for incremental sales and to build basket size. After all, consumers

don't eat roast beef on its own. Roast beef serves as an anchor to the meal, with consumers adding items such as potatoes and vegetables, breads, condiments, seasonings and yes, wine (of course), to complement their roast beef dinner.

## Ready for Roasting

Roast beef's not just the same old news. The folks at Canada Beef Inc.—an organization dedicated to providing beef expertise to both retailers and consumers—have new consumer and product knowledge to help retailers build effective marketing strategies that will leverage this core part of their business.

For starters, "What's old is new again," says John Baker, Vice President Market Development at Canada Beef (formerly the Beef Information Centre). In tightened economic times consumers seek out the foods they have loved in the past—traditional comfort foods such as roast beef. Consumers need a seasonal reminder about roast beef. "Roast beef tends to fall off the consumer's meal rotation cycle during the summer season," says Baker. "Come fall and winter, they need a jump-start to remember roast beef again and get it back into their meal planning." Retailers that simply remind

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customers about roast beef will grow the category.

“We looked at the barriers to roasting with today’s families and the results were a bit of a surprise to us,” says Joyce Parslow, culinary expert and Marketing Manager at Canada Beef. “The research findings indicate that beef roasts are more relevant than ever.”

According to a NPD *Health Track Canada* report, the top five factors influencing a consumer’s decision about what to make for the weekday meal were: taste, nutrition, having ingredients on hand, ease of prep and likeability. “We had a hunch that cooking time would be a roasting barrier, but this research, as well as our own, and that done at Kansas State [University], demonstrate that ‘cooking ease’ is more important to Canadian consumers than the actual prep or cooking time involved.

“There’s no easier meal to make than roast beef,” says Parslow. “Season it, put it in the oven and voilà—it cooks totally unattended. While it’s cooking you’re free to do what you want.” And with no tricky recipe or technique, roast beef also fulfills the consumer desire for fewer meal components/ingredients too. Who doesn’t have salt and pepper in the cupboard?

With nutrition as No. 2 on the consumer checklist for weekday meal decision-making, roast beef is a perfect fit. “Roast beef is part of a complete, wholesome meal—a basic food that’s chock-full of nutrients—it appeals to families looking for unprocessed, convenient meal solutions,” says Karine Gale, Registered Dietitian and Nutrition Program Manager at Canada Beef. “There’s opportunity to sell it that way—there’s nothing like getting a delicious

healthy meal on the table for your family with almost no effort; roast beef fits the bill.”

Other nutrition benefits cited by Gale: “It’s easy to moderate portion control at the table with roast beef—you carve off just what you want to eat. And a delicious roast beef meal is usually balanced out with veggies and a starch—served up with a glass of milk and it’s a sampling of *Canada’s Food Guide* all in one.”

An Ipsos Reid survey commissioned by Canada Beef found Canadians have more purchase confidence with roasts when they have buying and cooking information. Fifty-five per cent of consumers stated that cooking instructions on-pack were important for roasts, with 28% saying instructions would increase their purchase intent.

In this and other Canada Beef studies, consumers demonstrated confusion about buying the right roast for the dinner they have in mind. “Consumers that buy a blade roast and expect it to be like prime rib, are bound to be frustrated and disappointed,” says Parslow. Proper nomenclature combined with basic cooking instructions are two easy tools retailers can use to boost beef roast sales. “People are so used to picking up items in grocery and following the instructions on-pack to cook; we need give that same service at the fresh meat case,” she says.

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**Roast Beef Revival**

Canada Beef has gone to great lengths to boost consumer roasting confidence in the kitchen. They've recently perfected a simplified, two-step roasting instruction for all oven roasts.

Hailed as the "NO FAIL" method, the instruction was based on rigorous lab trials at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research facility in Lacombe, Alta., followed up with consumer focus group and in-home trials to verify consumer satisfaction. The new cooking instruction is designed to remove confusion around roasting beef and increase the chances that the roast will be cooked properly.

"It's a slow, low temperature cooking method that delivers the most juicy and tender roast beef with even cooking and the best browning," says Parslow. "You get a beautiful pink hue right through the whole roast,

with less cooking loss too—so it's a better yield for your money."

This is good news from a category standpoint as it improves the consumer's experience with roasts, resulting in fewer quality issues so there's increased chances of re-purchase. "This new cooking method produces the best outcome. It doesn't really matter which Oven Roast you start with, you're going to get a great result," says Parslow. "The two-step process, combined with the use of a thermometer to guide doneness, that's all you need for roasting success."

Merchandising beef roasts with digital read-out thermometers represent yet another opportunity for savvy retailers to grow that bottom line.

And Canada Beef has cut and pricing strategies to leverage beef roast sales, too. Canada Beef can guide retailers on how to cut traditional oven roasts into "Mini Quick Roasts"—one-pound (500-gram) roasts that serve two to three people and cook in less than an hour. More than just a small-sized roast, the Quick Roast cutting method produces small roasts without quality compromises. Test results indicate Quick Roast cuts cook more evenly and are more juicy and tender than just small-sized roasts.





We've seen some great success with Quick Roasts, working with major retailers across Canada," states John Baker. "The Quick Roast fits the consumers' desire to have roast beef ready in under an hour with just enough [food] for what they need that evening." Consumer response has been positive to Quick Roasts with research showing that 52% of roast-buying consumers say they are interested in purchasing Quick Roasts.

Another cut solution to the "just enough for dinner" desire is to feature roasts that are simply a small size to begin with. Tri-tip Bottom Sirloin can be sourced at around one to two pounds with no cutting or fabrication required. Roasting either in the oven or on the barbecue in 40 minutes or less, Tri-Tip is

**The new two-step cooking method combined with the use of a thermometer to guide doneness, that's all you need for roasting success, with whichever Oven Roast cut you use.**

**Oven Roast Cooking Instructions**

**Cook Times are guidelines only** and vary with ovens, roast type and shape. **Roasts may be done up to 30 minutes sooner or later than estimated times.** Use a meat thermometer to judge doneness.

- 1**  **Season** roast. Place, fat side up, on rack in shallow roasting pan (no water is necessary). Insert oven-safe meat thermometer into centre of roast, avoiding fat or bone.
- 2**  **\*Oven-sear** by placing uncovered roast in preheated 450°F (230°C) oven **for 10 minutes.**
- 3**  **Reduce** heat to 275°F (140°C). Cook to desired doneness, removing from oven when 5°F (3°C) below finished temperature. (Bone-in roast can take 30 to 45 minutes longer. Tenderloin can take 30 to 40 minutes less.)
- 4**  **Cover** with foil and let stand for at least 15 minutes. Roasts can stand 20 to 30 minutes before carving into thin slices.

**Estimated Cook Time (hours)**

Weight (kg)	Medium-Rare 145°F (63°C)	Medium to Well-Done 160°F (71°C) or +	Weight (lb)
1	1-3/4 to 2-1/4	2 to 2-1/2	2
1.5	2 to 2-1/2	2-1/4 to 2-3/4	3
2	2-1/4 to 2-3/4	2-1/2 to 3	4
2.5	2-1/2 to 3	2-3/4 to 3-1/4	5.5

**\*Not around to turn it down?** Skip Step 2 and roast at a constant 275°F (140°C). This is especially good for less tender cuts and smaller roasts (less than 1 kg/2 lb). Allow approx. 15% longer cook time.

**Tenderness Rating:** ★★★★★ Tenderloin • Rib • Rib Eye • Strip Loin • Top Sirloin • Prime Rib  
 ★★★★★ Sirloin Tip • Tri-tip • Rump  
 ★★★★★ Outside Round • Inside Round • Eye of Round



a tender, tasty roast positioned at an attractive price point. It's the perfect weeknight roast," says Baker.

And who says a large roast is really an issue? With a marketing message that plays up the convenience and value of the larger roasts, Canada Beef emphasizes the convenience angle of cooking large with a "cook once, eat twice" message that demonstrates leftover roast beef is the key to whipping up speedy next-day meals—it's the ultimate convenience food.

Canada Beef has also been working to create better perceived value for roasts at retail. "With one major retailer we've addressed the value issue with 'exact priced' roasts," says Baker. In this case, the processor and retailer worked together to develop roasts that sell at a set price, say \$10 for example. "Exact pricing takes all of the guesswork out of the purchase for the consumer making it easier for them to shop the meat case."

### Rev up for Roasting

Given the trends and information at hand, we're ready for a "roast beef revival," say the folks at Canada Beef. Savvy retailers will take advantage of the opportunity by stepping up merchandising efforts and marketing strategies:

- **Communicate roasting reminders:** 25% of consumers just don't think about roasting.
- **Create a roast beef section in-store:** 71% of consumers say a section for roasts is a great idea with 89% stating the meat case dividers will make shopping for roasts easier (Roast Beef Promo Study, 2009).
- **Include cooking instructions and recipes at shelf and on-pack:** One-half of consumers are more likely to buy an unfamiliar cut if there is a recipe on the package (ALMA Study, November 2010).
- **Initiate a Quick Roast strategy:** Fifty-two per cent of roast buying consumers say they are interested in purchasing one-pound (500-gram) Beef Quick Roasts, with 16% saying they would "definitely buy."

Canada Beef is a great resource for retailers to tap into. The organization has extensive consumer marketing tools and expertise on all things beef, with materials and messages that can be used in-store and in retailer's flyers, newsletters or website. Canada Beef works with retailers to develop materials and beef programs.

"We know beef best," says Parslow. "It's what we spend all of our time on."

## Roast Beef Tool Box

Need some help with your strategy to increase beef roast sales? Whether you're thinking of developing new marketing tools or need to tap into some market research or nutrition expertise, Canada Beef's websites can offer some strong support. Here is what's available freely to retailers:

- For striking beef images (raw and cooked) you can view and order at [canadabeefimages.ca](http://canadabeefimages.ca)
- For Canadian beef Standard Cooking Instructions and Nomenclature go to [canadianbeef.info](http://canadianbeef.info)

- Connect to beef Cooking Lessons, recipes, nutrition information and more at [beefinfo.org](http://beefinfo.org)
- Join the beef-centric consumer e-newsletter Make it Beef Club at [beefinfo.org](http://beefinfo.org)
- For information on beef cuts, merchandising and trade marketing initiatives/resources see [canadianbeef.info](http://canadianbeef.info)
- See what Canadian Beef fans are saying: [facebook.com/ILoveCanadianBeef](https://www.facebook.com/ILoveCanadianBeef) or Twitter: @CanadianBeef
- Call: 1-888-248-BEEF
- Link to online Canada Beef Oven Roast Cooking Lesson Video with this QR code:

