

Upper Iowa Beef Newsletter

we're so glad you're here!



Finding Strength in Change

2026 is already approaching the halfway mark! Hard to believe, but harvest season and the holidays will be upon us before long. We were blessed with a good spring that allowed crops to get planted on time, and it appears we have the potential for a bountiful harvest this fall.

The cattle market continues to be nothing short of resilient. While the cash market appears to have topped in mid-May, it has held up very well through June. Since last fall, we have seen plant closures and ongoing labor challenges as the industry works to right-size harvest capacity with the limited number of cattle available. While plant closures are never good, most of us knew some adjustments would eventually be necessary. Upper Iowa Beef continues to focus on operating as efficiently as possible and navigating these challenges for long-term viability. We understand that having a local processor in our area makes a tremendous difference in the price discovery process for cattle producers.

While supplies of market-ready cattle remain limited, the feedlot sector has adjusted by feeding cattle longer, resulting in carcasses that are 36 pounds heavier than a year ago as of this writing. These additional feeding days have led to record numbers of carcasses grading Prime and CAB. I never thought we would see national averages reach 17% Prime and 40% CAB—roughly double the percentages of just a few years ago. The increased supply of these premium grades, combined with already high beef prices, has pressured demand and significantly changed grid premiums, as many of you are seeing firsthand. We will see if those premiums strengthen again this fall heading into the holiday season.

Profitability at the feedlot level has been exceptional over the past several years. The question is, what have you done with those profits? Have you invested in your operation through facility upgrades or expansion? Have you updated your equipment? If you are in the cow-calf business, have you invested in higher-quality, carcass-oriented genetics? We know tighter margins are ahead, and the decisions made during profitable times will determine your ability to remain competitive in the future. Reinvesting in your core business is critical to long-term success. Cattle can be fed in the Upper Midwest as cost-effectively as anywhere, and we need all of our cattle suppliers to remain profitable and sustainable so they can pass their operations on to the next generation.

Enjoy your summer, and remember to keep beef front and center as you celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary this July 4th. We are fortunate to live in a country that gives us the freedom and opportunity to succeed through hard work, innovation, and independent thinking.

Update Your Producer Affidavit

Upper Iowa Beef is in need of updated producer affidavits for 2026. Included with this newsletter is a paper copy of the affidavit. If you have not done so already, **please fill this out and mail it back to us** at 4614 US-63, Lime Springs, Iowa 52155 or **deliver it to our office**.

Thank you!

Welcome 2026 Summer Interns:



Taylor Quade

Iowa State University

Taylor is from Charles City, Iowa, and is entering her senior year at Iowa State University, majoring in animal science. Taylor is excited to connect with producers and learn all the ins and outs of beef production at a processing plant. Taylor will also be assisting in surveying producers this summer!



Adisyn Schramm

Virginia Tech

Adisyn is from King William, Virginia, and is entering her senior year at Virginia Tech, majoring in animal and poultry science. Adisyn is looking forward to getting to know new people, networking, and learning about the beef processing industry while being able to fluently speak about all FSQA has to offer!



Noah Murray

Iowa State University

Noah is from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and is entering his senior year at Iowa State University, majoring in animal science. Noah is excited to gain more knowledge and insight into the beef processing field!



Jacob Willson

Iowa State University

Jacob is from Shell Rock, Iowa, and is entering his senior year at Iowa State University, majoring in agricultural studies. Jacob is looking forward to learning more about quality assurance in the beef packing industry!

Join us in extending a warm welcome to our 2026 Summer Interns! We wish them a summer filled with success, growth, and valuable learning experiences.

Welcome to the Upper Iowa Beef Team:



Bayleigh Huelsenbeck

We're excited to introduce Bayleigh Huelsenbeck to our Upper Iowa Beef producers. Originally from LaOtto, Indiana, Bayleigh joins the team with a strong agricultural background and a passion for the livestock industry.

Bayleigh recently graduated from Purdue University with a bachelor's degree in animal sciences, with a concentration in animal agribusiness, along with a minor in food and agribusiness management. Growing up on a row crop farm and actively participating in 4-H livestock projects helped develop her appreciation for agriculture and the cattle industry at an early age.

In her role at Upper Iowa Beef, Bayleigh brings a fresh perspective, new ideas, and a strong desire to build relationships with producers while supporting the continued growth of the company. Her educational background, combined with hands-on agricultural experience, gives her a unique understanding of both production agriculture and the business side of the industry.

Please join us in welcoming Bayleigh to the Upper Iowa Beef team—we're glad to have her with us and look forward to what we'll accomplish together!



Brenna Berns

Introducing Brenna Berns, the new marketing coordinator at Upper Iowa Beef. We are excited to have her on board, expanding our marketing and communications efforts. Based in Waukon, Iowa, Brenna grew up on a beef cow/calf operation, bringing a deep-rooted passion for the cattle industry.

Brenna graduated in December of 2025 from Iowa State University with a degree in marketing and a minor in advertising. Her understanding of livestock, strong focus on public relations, and dedication to the industry make Brenna a valuable resource for our team.

Brenna will be spending the summer surveying our producers for the USRSB Self-Assessment and UIB Sustainability Survey. Please join us in welcoming her to the team and be on the lookout for her reaching out to all of our producers soon!

The survey is included with this newsletter—please fill it out and mail it back to us in a timely manner. If you have any questions, please call our office at (563) 566-2202.

SKIRT STEAK WITH ARRACHERA RUB

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 to 3 pounds skirt steak
- 2 Tablespoons coarse salt
- 2 Tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 Tablespoon smoked paprika
- 1 Tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 ½ teaspoons fresh cracked black pepper
- 1 ½ teaspoons red pepper flakes
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried cilantro
- 1 teaspoon chili pepper
- ½ teaspoon cumin



INSTRUCTIONS:

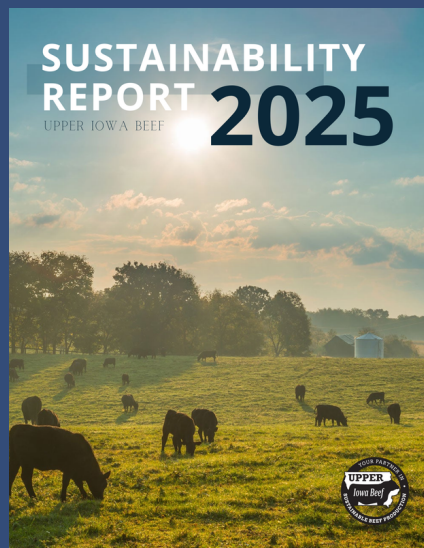
- Combine all spice ingredients in a mixing bowl.
- Cut skirt steak into three-inch (7.5 cm) wide pieces WITH the direction of the grain.
- Season steak pieces evenly with spice rub. Cover tightly in plastic wrap or a zipper-locking plastic bag. Refrigerate for at least one hour or overnight before cooking.
- Grill steaks over high heat to medium rare. Allow to rest for five minutes before serving. Slice against the grain into thin strips.

Don't forget to support your local retail outlets carrying Upper Iowa Beef!

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The 2025 Upper Iowa Beef Sustainability Report



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