

## Russ Fulmer – Premium Meats

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Quality: It's defined by Merriam-Webster as "degree of excellence" or "superiority in kind." One Kansas entrepreneur set out to achieve and share high quality with meat, and that has led to a unique retail store for Kansas products. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Russ Fulmer and wife Roxey are the owners of Fulmer's Kansas Premium Meats and Eatery near Belvue. Russ is a third-generation farmer and cattle feeder in Pottawatomie County, so he knows first-hand the importance of feeding and handling cattle properly in order to achieve the best results. When a farmer-owned cooperative named U.S. Premium Beef devised a system for providing compensation for higher quality product, it helped beef quality to advance.

Russ Fulmer was custom-feeding cattle for producers who were involved with U.S. Premium Beef, and he was excited to see higher quality production be rewarded. "When you start with excellent genetics and the cattle are fed right and cared for right, you get a better cut of meat," Russ said. He liked the process of continually improving the quality of the product.

His friends and family liked the higher quality production too. They started buying beef directly from him.

"We were selling quarters and halves of beef," Russ said. "We realized there was demand for high quality meat. We even got licensed and built a little building so we could do that out on the farm, but we were out in the country."

In 2013, he had the opportunity to buy land in a more visible location right on Highway 24. "We built a larger building and added an eatery," Russ said. He named the business Fulmer's Kansas Premium Meats and Eatery.

The beef came from his own Angus herd which was pasture raised and grass fed until finished on a corn silage ration and then taken to a local processor. "We still use the old fashioned, natural, dry-aged process of about 14 days to provide a great robust flavor and increase tenderness in the meat," Russ said.

The store offers steaks, roasts, and hamburger, plus pork chops, bacon, ham, hot dogs, sausage, and much more in locker-style cuts. Specialty items include chicken, turkey, and even buffalo and elk. Bundles include combos with such names as Steak Lovers, Smoker's Pit, Batter's Up, Wild Game, and the Ultimate Feast. Beside meat, the store offers a variety of other Kansas products such as granola, salsa, jam, jerky, and honey.

The emphasis is on quality and Kansas. "Pretty much our entire store is Kansas-based," Russ said. "Virtually every product comes from Kansas."

The eatery is located right inside the store also. It offers lunch daily, Monday through Saturday. "There were some retired women here who loved to cook, and they are really good," Russ said. They work part-time and make home-cooked food. "I was really lucky to find them," Russ said.

"One of these women is really good at smoking meats, so she will do that for us," Russ said. "We grill our hamburgers and hot dogs, no matter the weather." The menu

includes various forms of burgers, bierocks, hot dogs, and pulled pork sandwiches. K-State Call Hall ice cream is a favorite dessert.

His ingenious plan was for the eatery and the product sales to work together. “I want people to come into the eatery and say, ‘Gosh, that was really good. Do you have any more of that?’ And we can say, ‘Yes, we have that right over here,’” Russ said.

Russ’s future goals include catering for outside groups and hosting a steak night in the eatery, once a month or even once a week. His ultimate goal is quality for the customer. “I guarantee this product 100 percent,” Russ said.

Customers have taken notice. “When people drive in from Kansas City, they stock up,” Russ said. That’s a credit to a business located in a rural community like Belvue, population 227 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, see [www.kansaspremiummeats.com](http://www.kansaspremiummeats.com).

Quality. That’s the goal of Fulmer’s Kansas Premium Meats and Eatery. We salute Russ Fulmer for making a difference in the meat retail business. His commitment to improvement is a very desirable quality.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.