



## “What You Need to Know” Guidelines for Calling on Retailers

Creating partnerships with retailers is about helping them be more successful. The following guidelines, or points to consider, are based on discussions with specialty and independent retailers about niche pork products and what it takes to approach them effectively for mutual success.

**BE PREPARED** – Be prepared to tell them about your operation. Be prepared to find out what you need to know about them.

Many specialty and independent retailers haven’t ever been approached by a pork producer directly, and in some cases would like to be. So there may not be a set expectation for how that should work, but there will be things they’ll want to know about you and your product right away, and things you should find out about them right away.

**WHAT THEY MAY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOU** – Different retailers will want to know different things in the first minutes of that initial sales call. It may be:

- how the animal is raised
- what the animal is fed
- if it’s locally grown
- if antibiotics are given
- if product is injected during processing
- government inspection
- certified point of slaughter
- how you can help increase their sales
- your unique point of differentiation – what’s different about your product versus other niche pork products – one of the keys to specialty and independent retailers’ success is offering products that help them stand out from their competition, especially in the meat case

**WHAT YOU’LL WANT TO FIND OUT ABOUT THEM** – Different retailers will have different likes/dislikes and requirements for carrying niche pork products. It may be:

- a preference for farm direct or via a wholesaler/distributor
- consistent supply is a must or supply can fluctuate if communication/service regarding availability is proactive
- meat personnel are union scale making time spent on extra tasks costly and efficiency of deliveries is important
- volume requirements – smaller independent retailers are sometimes expected by their suppliers to sell more than they can handle, other retailers require higher volume

**WHAT MAY HELP GIVE YOU AN ADVANTAGE** – When retailers were asked about types of support that would be most beneficial to them, top responses included:

- willingness to participate in in-store sampling or selling events (sampling equipment and expectations vary store to store, be sure to clarify their needs)
- ability to educate their customers on your product
- ideas on easy-to-prepare meal solutions – many customers come into their stores without preconceived ideas about what to buy/prepare and are looking for solutions that are quick and easy
- point-of-sale materials (signage, flyers, information about your pork)
- pork recipes\* that can be distributed in store
- pork preparation tips\*
- ideas for utilizing different cuts of pork\*

**Other advantages include:**

- established brand equity in the marketplace – if your product is signaged on menus in known restaurants or supported by advertising/marketing efforts
- a proven ability to capture a price premium

**HOW BEST TO APPROACH SPECIALTY AND INDEPENDENT RETAILERS FOR AN INITIAL MEETING**

The decision-maker may be the owner, general manager, director of meat operations, or meat manager. The smaller the operation, the higher up you'll want to aim.

If you can, shop their meat case in advance to understand a little about their current offerings and be willing to learn about how the retailer is positioned in the marketplace.

In many cases, a phone call to set an appointment for a face-to-face meeting is all that's needed. Some may want to see your product at the first meeting. Some may request information about your product in advance of the first meeting.

Getting back to the first point, be prepared.

\* *Pork recipes, pork preparation tips, and basic pork cuts are available for your use at [nichepork.org](http://nichepork.org).*