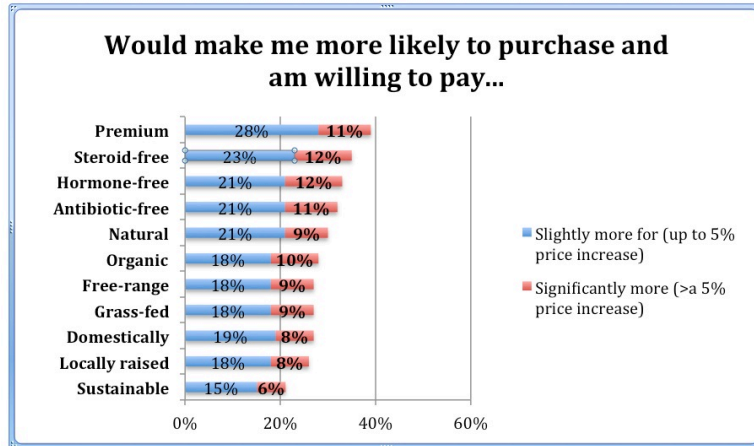


What Sells "Premium" Burgers?

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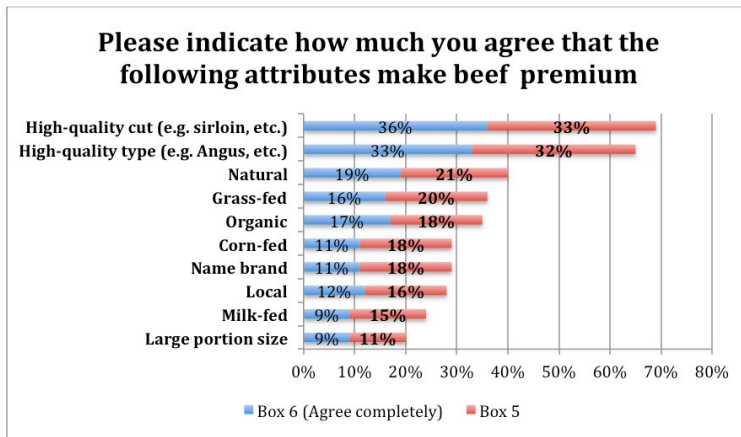
How do you convince diners to pay more for a higher-quality burger? The most persuasive menu term is also one of the least specific. Speaking at last week's 2012 Protein Innovation Summit hosted by [Meatingplace](#) magazine, Technomic Executive Vice President Darren Tristano presented data on consumer attitudes to beef quality (not just burgers). According to Technomic's [2011 Center of the Plate Beef & Pork Consumer Trend Report](#), 28% of diners say the amorphous descriptor "**premium**" would make them more willing to pay up to 5% more for beef at a restaurant or supermarket. Another 11% say that seeing that word would make them willing to pay more than 5% more. [Click on charts to access larger versions.]



Source: Technomic Center of the Plate Beef & Pork Consumer Trend Report

This puts "premium" ahead of such health-related terms as "**steroid-free**," "**hormone free**" and "**antibiotic free**," although each of these terms remains persuasive for significant percentages of consumers. Least persuasive of the terms included was "**sustainable**," which 15% said would lead them to spend up to 5% more.

Interestingly, McDonald's uses "premium" as a menu descriptor but only for its higher-priced chicken sandwiches, not for its burgers. Technomic's findings come as many of the growing "better burger" chains strive to set themselves apart by promoting the high quality of the beef they use. [Elevation Burger](#), for example, touts its use of "100% organic, grass-fed, free-range beef." The [Cheeburger](#) chain adopted all-natural, additive-free Angus beef. [Farm Burger](#) in the Atlanta area proudly serves grass-fed beef free of antibiotics and hormones. These terms signal quality, certainly, but consumers like "premium" even better. But what do diners mean by "premium"?



Source: Technomic Center of the Plate Beef & Pork Consumer Trend Report

Technomic gave consumers a list of attributes and asked how much they agreed (from a low of 1 to a high of 6) each of these words make beef qualify as "premium." The **quality of the cut** (tenderloin, sirloin, etc.) most strongly signaled "premium" (36% gave it a 6, or "agree completely"). Close behind is the **quality of the beef type** (Angus, Wagyu, Kobe, etc.).

"Natural," "grass-fed" and "organic" also scored well, garnering a total (boxes 6 and 5) of more than one-third of consumers.

Combining these two charts, it seems the most persuasive "sell" for a burger would be "premium, 100% Angus sirloin."

[The Counter](#) chain comes close to that ideal, promoting its burgers as "100% natural Angus beef, hormone and antibiotic free."

[Smashburger](#) focuses on beef-type by promoting its "100% Certified Angus beef." The [Burger 21](#) chain in the Southeast serves "All-American Angus chuck" burgers. [Bagger Dave's Legendary Burger Tavern](#) is one of the few to already incorporate the top term,

promoting its use of "premium Midwest ground beef."