



Around THE WORLD

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I'll take a grande, quad, ristretto, nonfat, dry, cappuccino, please. That's a far cry from the way we used to order a cup of coffee—black, two sugars, one cream please. Seems like I keep using Starbucks coffee as an example—but why not?—I can't think of a more successful company this past decade to try and learn something from.

I've touched on it before, but I am going to touch on it again. I keep picking up these little sound bites about the variation in Limousin blood we have available within the breed, but I fail to see where variety is a bad thing.

There are a lot of potential customers out there who have totally different preferences. If you don't believe me, walk into a Starbucks and take a look at their menu. It covers a whole wall and most of the choices revolve around some variation of coffee.

It's not a big problem, but from time-to-time I will have a conversation with a breeder who prefers to raise fullblood cattle. They express their concern about the low-percentage cattle being allowed into the NALF Herd Book. A few minutes later, I can be talking to a breeder of Lim-Flex cattle and he has the same concerns about fullblood cattle.

What's ironic is both will tell you their market has been strong and the demand is good for the kind of cattle they are raising. Again, I can't see where having variety is a bad thing.

We all hear talk about the mainstream market and that the industry needs to work on uniformity, and I do think those are two important goals. But make no mistake, I'm only referring to variation in percent Limousin blood, not variation in quality. I do believe whether you're raising fullbloods, purebreds or Lim-Flex, there is a specific target that has been dictated in the marketplace. For your cattle to be in demand, they must fall in these parameters. That said, there are enough specialty markets out there that if you have found one that is profitable, why change anything until the market dictates it?

The bottom line is quality. It's a word we wear out in advertising, but it truly is everything when it comes to selling something for a premium. Why do you think people stand in line to pay \$4 for a cup of coffee? They believe Starbucks stands for quality and that quality comes in many different shapes and sizes.

In closing, let's think of it from a national association standpoint. Starbucks could not be Starbucks if it didn't offer "regular" coffee (or straight Limousin) to make all of these variety of products from. But how successful would they be if all they offered on the menu was "regular" coffee with the only variations being cream and sugar.

I will say it again—variety is not a bad thing.

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