

## **Dry Aging vs Wet Aging:**

Some of you may be familiar with the process of aging meat. Aging of meat helps to make meat more tender which makes the consumer's eating experience more enjoyable. It is one of the reasons that Luigi's has enjoyed critical praise for the quality of our meat over the years. Our Sterling Silver beef and our Buckhead Pride products both have a 21-day wet age specification prior to delivery. It often ages for another week or so in our cooler before being cut, seasoned and prepared for the customer.

What about Dry Aging? Let's look at the differences.

**Wet Aging:** Wet Aged beef is aged inside a vacuum package – the moisture is retained within the packaging while the meat is aging. This is the beef flavor profile that most people are familiar with.

**Dry Aging:** Dry-aged beef was aged outside a package and the cut of beef (i.e. Strip Loin) loses moisture to the environment. Dry aging requires a dedicated room or refrigerator with specific humidity and temperature requirements (75-85% humidity and 36-39 degrees F). During this process, the meat shrinks from dehydration and can lose up to 33% of its wet weight, which means the steaks are considerably more expensive. The flavor profile is more earthy and nutty and is considerably more firm.

The majority of beef is wet-aged because it allows moisture to be retained and it is significantly less expensive. This is the typically the type of meat you will find in the grocery store. However, most grocery stores are receiving meat at the 7-10 day ageing mark. Luigi's, however, has a significantly longer aging spec (21 days minimum) that allows for enhance flavor and tenderness.

Dr. Ty Lawrence, doctorate in meat science and professor of animal science at West Texas A&M University, provides some clarification. "Aging meat is the process of allowing time to pass so that enzymes (specifically  $\mu$ -calpain) can break down ultrastructural proteins, thus reducing the resistance to biting and chewing," Dr. Lawrence said.

The main difference in the two aging methods, Dry vs Wet, is a noticeable difference in flavor and cost. "During the dry aging process, the fats oxidize and subtly change in flavor. The lost moisture also causes a concentration of flavor, thus dry-aged meats most commonly have a more intense flavor profile," he said. Dry aged meats also have a more dense consistency due to the lack of moisture. But "The moisture loss of dry-aged beef increases product costs and is typically reserved for high-end restaurants," Dr. Lawrence explained.