

Moscow Steakhouses Seek Workarounds for Ban on U.S. Beef

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Some Moscow steakhouses are finding it hard to shop around the ban on American beef.

Uilliam's Restaurant has struck ribeye steak off its menu altogether.

We now cannot ensure proper quality of the dish that you got used to, the eatery said on its Facebook page earlier this month. "We decided to battle this problem in a drastic way."

The restaurant is promising to reinstate the savory menu choice as soon as it finds the "best" replacement for American beef.

Russia banned U.S. beef, pork and turkey imports Feb. 11 over the use of the feed additive ractopamine, in a move that came amid increased political tension between the countries.

Other countries, such as Australia, also supply the kind of top-of-the-line beef required for the art of cooking a steak, but for some eateries that preferred U.S. Products, there is

nothing equally yummy at the moment.

"People are dealing with this as well as they can," said a manager at one popular city restaurant, which did not want its name mentioned in a story concerning problems with its business. "We are working to buy meat that is not yet on the market."

In the interim, the establishment is serving steaks from prime meat that is available in Russia, warning diners that they are not of U.S. origin, she said.

"Most of the guests are upset because they favor American beef," she said.

Uncle Sam's Cafe, despite its all-so-American name, will soon switch to Australian beef, said its chef Sergei Anikin. It is running out of its stockpile of U.S. frozen pre-ban beef, he said.

According to Anikin, beef from Australia is of similar quality but a little more expensive.

"Many restaurants swapped the U.S. for Australia," he said.

Although U.S. farmers have specific ways of feeding cattle and producing beef, only the most fastidious gourmets will notice any change in flavor, Anikin said. It is only after several days in a row of eating an American steak that a person would tell the difference between it and an Australian equivalent, he said.

Restaurant managers and wait staff will need to explain the culinary tweak so guests do not complain, he added.

Despite the new trend on the market, Australian meat importers have yet to see their moment of glory. Oksana Tokareva, a spokeswoman for Metro Cash & Carry, said Friday that the chain of supermarkets for business customers had not observed a surge in demand for Australian prime beef.

In addition to Australia, restaurant representatives polled for this story named Canada, Ireland, France and Argentina as countries that supply steakhouse-quality meat.

The issue of allowing U.S. meat imports is not on the agenda, Yevgeny Nepoklonov, deputy head of the Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service, said after meeting U.S. officials at a World Trade Organization conference in Geneva last week.

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