WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A synthetic or isolated polynucleotide encoding a mammalian 18S rRNA that is resistant to pactamycin, wherein the pactamycin-resistance is conferred by one or more single residue substitutions in the 18S rRNA sequence, wherein the single residue substitution is at a position corresponding to G963, A964, C1065 or C1066 of mouse 18S rRNA (SEQ ID NO:23); a complementary sequence thereto; or a sequence that is at least 95% identical thereto and contains one or more single residue substitutions at a position corresponding to G963, A964, C1065, or C1066~~to the foregoing~~.

2. The polynucleotide of claim 1, wherein the single residue substitution is at a position corresponding to position G963 of SEQ ID NO:23.

3. The polynucleotide of claim 1, wherein the single residue substitution corresponds to a G963A substitution in SEQ ID NO:23.

4. The polynucleotide of claim 1, wherein the polynucleotide encodes human 18S rRNA or mouse 18S rRNA.

5. The polynucleotide of claim 1, wherein the polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO:23 except for a G963A substitution.

6. A mammalian 18S rRNA encoded by the polynucleotide of claim 1.

7. An expression vector expressing the polynucleotide of claim 1.

8. The vector of claim 7, wherein the polynucleotide further comprises the 5' ETS and ITS1 of the rDNA sequence.

9. The vector of claim 7, further comprises a pol-I promoter or a cytomegalovirus (CMV) promoter.

10. The vector of claim 7, further comprises the 3' ETS or an SV40 poly(A) signal.

11. A host cell harboring the expression vector of claim 7.

12. A kit comprising the expression vector of any one of claims 7-10 and/or a cell containing the expression vector.

13. A method for preferentially translating a recombinant mRNA, the method comprising: