

Food for Thought

People • Products • Purpose

August 2022

“The great rural interests are human interests, and good crops are of little value to the farmer unless they open the door to a good kind of life on the farm.”

— President Theodore Roosevelt in a letter establishing the Commission on Country Life in 1912

Local bounty

In July, Jenn Panariso resumed her Saturday morning seasonal farm stand at Colorado Coffee Merchants, which is located just down the street from the Fillmore store.



Now that Jenn Panariso has re-opened One Eleven Neighborhood Farm for the season, some of her fresh produce will begin appearing alongside Colorado Coffee Merchant's Friday night steak dinners as well as for sale at Ranch Foods Direct. This year she's growing more spicy salad mix, beets, shishito peppers, cherry tomatoes and patty pan squash, items that proved especially popular during her first growing season. “We didn't raise our prices this year, even though a lot of my expenses have gone up,” she says. “I do this because I believe in it, and I love connecting with people.” Farming alongside a full-time job sometimes means harvesting at night with a headlamp. And the unique rigors of Colorado gardening are simply “an opportunity to problem solve,” from her sunny perspective. She makes a point to collaborate with other local businesses, including an artist friend who made the hand-carved stamps she uses as a logo and for prints on reusable bags and t-shirts. While her urban farm provides access to just-picked-fresh food, it also enhances the neighborhood. One customer recently asked what the neighbors think of having beehives next door. “They love it,” she responded. “They didn't even know their trees were fruit trees until the bees pollinated them. Now they are so grateful, they even set out water for the bees everyday.”



Jenn's new favorite thing at Ranch Foods Direct? The body soaps made with Callicrate beef tallow. “I don't have to use nearly as much lotion because they are so moisturizing,” she says. For her husband, it's the raw milk dairy share he gets from Hi Plains Dairy.

The future of food is local, regenerative



'Live a life of service and giving; don't worry

about the money, it will come'

Ahavah Farms east of Falcon operates one of the highest quality, largest, most diverse year-round CSAs in the country with a convenient weekly drop-off at the Peak to Plains Food Hub. In some ways you could say Ahavah is to produce what Ranch Foods Direct is to beef and pork. Owner Yosef Camire shares a special connection with Ranch Foods Direct founder and owner Mike Callicrate.

"I love his attitude. I love his mission, and what his company does for the community," Yosef says. "It's a great drop-off location for us: it's indoors, it's air-conditioned and there's plenty of space. There's so much interconnectivity between us. People who shop there are usually members of our CSA and vice versa. So this is exactly what I think we need to be doing. If we have the space to build up the local food community, why wouldn't we?"

*Customers can start a new Ahavah produce subscription at any time by calling the farm at 719-233-7828. New shares will be prorated. Online sign-up opens quarterly for full seasonal shares. **Fall CSAs available now.** Ahavah also operates a farm stand in conjunction with the CSA delivery drop-off at the Peak to Plains Food Hub every Friday from 2:30-3:30 p.m.*



"I'm reading *The End of the World is Just the Beginning*, by Peter Zeihan. An amazing book. It talks about how we got to the point of globalization and how now that's all ending. So we have to start producing everything again.

Globalization is coming to an end because it has to. We don't have an option. Going local is the future. It's the only way to go. I think it will be a reawakening. I really hope so."

In spite of having gorgeous, chemical-free produce, Ahavah keeps its prices very affordable, including donating shares to those in need and using a unique pay-what-you-can model pioneered by the Camire family when they started the farm eight years ago. At the same time it's important to Yosef that consumers realize just how undervalued food has become in the modern economy.

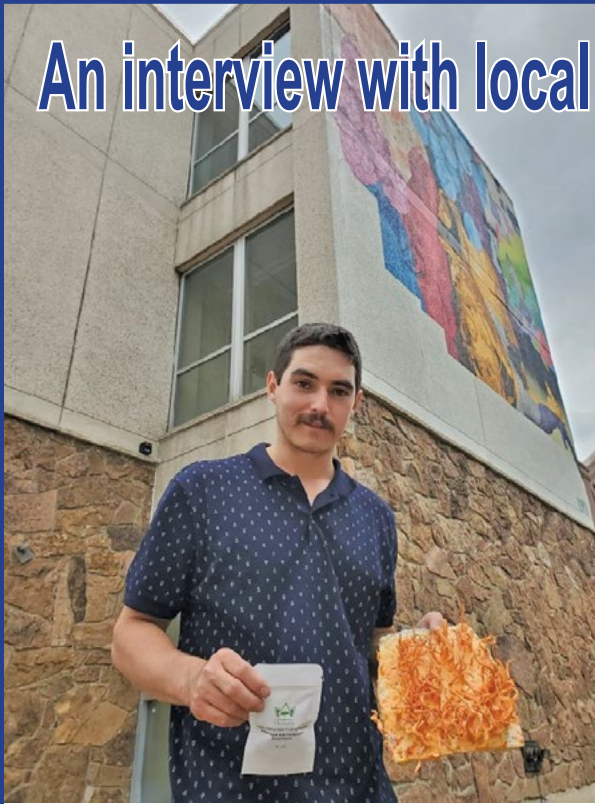
"What I wish people knew is those carrots we sell for 4 bucks? They cost us more than 4 bucks to produce. It's not easy. You have to prep the ground, plant the seed, water it and weed it, and then compost it to maintain it, let it sit for three months, pull them up, bunch them, wash them, put them in a bin, label it, pack it and deliver it. All of that for 4 bucks? Plus, these are biodynamic carrots with many more times the nutrient density of a Whole Foods carrot."

Since the pandemic, food hubs like Peak to Plains have become even more essential, Yosef believes, calling it "a confusing ugly time" that is likely to bring about long-term lasting changes in the food system.

Ahavah's Friday delivery day includes buy-four-get-one-free on ground beef at Peak to Plains!



An interview with local food entrepreneur Patru Dumitru



Patru Dumitru grows and sells exotic mushrooms and microgreens, but he also invented the HerbaHammock, an indoor home growing kit comprised of a 2 ft-by-2 ft hydroponic unit that can produce 30 heads of lettuce a month with less than 2 minutes of maintenance once a week. Each unit is equipped with an LED light panel and other supplies.

SoCo Market update

SoCo Virtual Farmers Market took the summer off to regroup, although members can still order from select vendors that offer home delivery. SoCo also has a unique arrangement to sell native plants, trees and shrubs through Harding Nursery. “You buy what you want through the SoCo Market and you are emailed a voucher you can take to the nursery to pick it up. They have a huge selection, and you get your order at a discounted price,” says founder and farmer Katie Belle Miller. SoCo emerged during the height of the pandemic as the right thing at the right time but it also has the advantage of being nimble and fluid and able to pivot in new directions as the needs of the community change, Katie says. She is now part of a food collaborative exploring the potential to set up an outlet in Denver and is also following developments related to a vendor-owned local food marketplace in Monument with the goal of eventually having a bricks-and-mortar retail store.



What got you interested in growing food? Self-sustainability really. If you can grow your own food you have one of your three essential needs met: food, shelter, water. Collecting water isn't too hard if you needed to do it. The other thing is shelter. But if you have those things, you don't need other outside inputs. I feel like once that happens, and we're self-sustainable, we'll see a change in what kind of jobs people get or what they choose to do.

How has the pandemic affected your business? It really pushed people to find a source a local food in case the trucks don't come in. All the empty shelves in the grocery stores sure did get people thinking.

What's your connection to Ranch Foods Direct? We might be working together in some way on a new building complex opening in Monument. It will be a place where producers are producing and also selling their stuff on site. I think it's a great concept that, when proven successful, is also going to be a catalyst for people knowing more about where stuff comes from and being inspired to try doing it themselves and creating a community around it.

Why do you think there are so few existing businesses structured in a way that provides producer ownership? It's having the vision to put it together and also have it make financial sense and also the execution, which requires having all the right team players show up. And you have to have consumers interested in it, too, which I think they are. I think it's a matter of timing. At first people wanted to grow their own food, but then grocery stores came along, and it was, oh, look, this is more convenient. But then we found out during the pandemic that convenience might not be the most important thing. So now we're switching back to a more local perspective.

What do you wish consumers knew about what it takes to grow food? It does take some time and learning but in the end it's worth it. If you've got 15 minutes to spend on social media, you have 15 minutes to grow some lettuce. It's just a matter of trying it out and reaping the benefits of your labor and connecting with people around you and being like, hey, can you grow this and I'll grow this, and we'll take care of each other.



Callicrate Cattle Company hosted a tour for around 50 members of the Colorado Independent Cattle Growers Association in mid-July. The processing plant in St. Francis, Kansas, provides custom slaughtering for many independent ranchers who would otherwise not be able to direct market their own beef. Following the tour, guests were treated to beef barbacoa and pork carnitas prepared by Ranch Foods Direct's talented in-house chef Adrian Mota.



Ranch Foods Direct provides access to farm-direct beef, eggs, pork and more!

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