

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

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“Our future national strength rests in our soils.”

— William Albrecht

‘Little packages of decadence’

Nicki Rosa, owner of Java Mountain Baking, makes popular trail bars for healthy snacking. Here’s more about them, as well as her thoughts on eating well and supporting local.

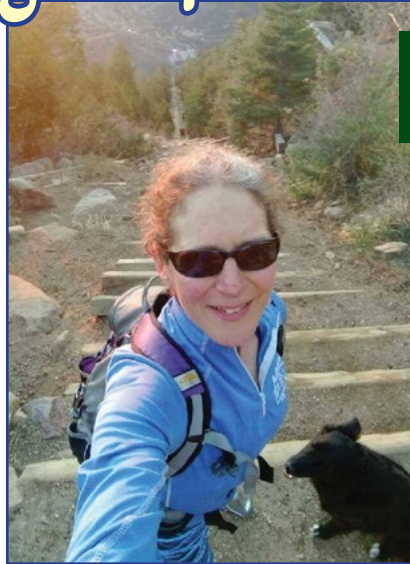
TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND:

Growing up I always liked to bake. I still have a picture of me with the next-door neighbor girls making cookies, and I would make breakfast for my brother in the mornings. When my husband and I started operating a couple of coffee shops, we would get scones from a bakery, and I thought why buy these, I can make them myself. The bars came about through my Colorado Trails job. I was a guide. We would put on treks for a week at a time. When you’re doing something like that, you need some serious calories! I got the recipe for the original peanut butter bar from one of the hikers. Now we’re up to ten flavors. Pumpkin spice and banana walnut are the latest. I like to think of each one as a little package of decadence.

WHAT MAKES THEM HEALTHY? None of them contain any flour or wheat. Most of them contain oats, which is very healthy, although technically it does contain minute amounts of gluten. My paleo bar is just nuts and seeds and fruit. If you look at my label, it’s oats, eggs, stuff you can pronounce. I’ve also cut way back on the sugar. No high fructose corn syrup, just real food, ingredients everyone will recognize.

HOW DID YOU BECOME A RANCH FOODS VENDOR? I was in the Ranch Foods Direct store all the time, and at one point I saw the baked goods and told them, hey, I bake too. They asked me to bring in samples. I’ve been delivering the trail bars ever since.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE PRODUCTS? I buy the big bones for my dogs, and the dogfood, which



An avid hiker, Nicki Rosa is shown here doing the Manitou Incline with her dogs at her side.

contains ground beef, bone meal and organ meats. Beef is really important for dogs. Also, eggs, cheese, seafood, and vegetables. I love how the store works directly with farmers. Everything is healthy because it came directly from a farmer. I don’t like a lot of what’s happening with our food industry.

WHAT’S YOUR APPROACH TO HEALTHY EATING?

Just look for homemade, locally made, no preservatives and support local businesses — that’s what my company is all about. No chemicals, no words you can’t pronounce. When I’m at a store, looking at labels, if I can’t pronounce it, I won’t eat it.

DO YOU EAT DESSERT? I eat a few small squares of really dark chocolate to calm the sweet tooth. I’m a dark chocolate fanatic.

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT RISING FOOD PRICES?

You get what you pay for. You can either pay it now or in healthcare bills on down the road. There’s no more important way to spend your money. I tell people, if you buy cheap, you’re selling out to the lowest bidder. And of course good meat just tastes better. I read the book *Fast Food Nation*, so I know how mainstream beef is raised. It shocked me. I’ll never forget the chapter on the flavorings made by factories in New Jersey that are added to food and designed to get us addicted. Another story that really got me was *Super Size Me*, about what happened when someone ate at McDonalds for a solid month. It took close to a year for him to lose the weight and stop the cravings. That had a profound impact on me. We’re very fortunate to have a place like Ranch Foods Direct here. There’s nowhere else like it in town.

Carnivore conviction

Customer
Profile

Edie Cooper Willhite is a committed Ranch Foods Direct customer from Manitou Springs.

TALK ABOUT YOUR APPROACH TO HEALTHY EATING: I'm doing the carnivore way of eating. My husband and I both decided to do it a year ago, so we live off of everything Ranch Foods Direct. It's been really wonderful for us physically.

WHAT CONVINCED YOU TO DO IT? We did keto a couple of years back, and it worked pretty well. I listened to a lot of YouTube interviews and podcasts with people like Dr. Ken Berry, Dr. Anthony Chaffee, Dr. Shawn Baker (author of 2018's *The Carnivore Diet*) — and it just made

sense to me that meat was the proper human diet. These are real doctors seeing real results. I love meat, too, so it all works out. I dropped down to my high school weight very easily and naturally. Eating carnivore helped me lose about 25 pounds, and when I did keto, it was about the same. So I've lost 50 pounds in the last few years. All my inflammation is gone, my skin looks great.

DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE EATING THIS WAY INDEFINITELY?

I believe so. I have started adding in a few things like blueberries and organic wine. But I will say when I do veer off a little bit,

my body lets me know. Overall, I feel the best when I am strict carnivore. And feeling good beats a temporary yummy flavor in your mouth any day.

DESCRIBE HOW YOU GOT INTO MAKING BEEF JERKY: I never did like the way most beef jerkies were kind of leathery. So I bought a slicer and a dehydrator, and through trial and error, I came up with the perfect decadent beef jerky. Because of the marbling in the Wagyu, it's moist, and because of how thin it is, it's almost like a potato chip that melts in your mouth. I gave it as gifts to everyone at the store for Christmas. Now I eat jerky for breakfast in the mornings. It's quick, easy and delicious, and I'm not hungry until later in the day when I have an early dinner, usually steak. When you have quality meat, you don't ever get tired of it. You might as well be eating chocolate.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A CUSTOMER? I discovered the store a couple years ago. Prior to that I'd been going to the Woodland Park butchers. They've since closed. I heard about Ranch Foods Direct through them. After they sold out and moved to Florida, I switched over to Ranch Foods Direct.

WHAT DO YOU BUY IN ADDITION TO THE WAGYU STEAKS? My dog loves the treats there. I use the tallow skin cream; it works wonderfully. My husband really likes the ground beef. He likes to make it with scrambled eggs. That's a regular for him.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE STORE? The people there know me well, they know what meats I like. They are very accommodating of special orders. It's like family. Just a great atmosphere. One of the things I love about it is that so many people bring in high quality items they make themselves. It's that old corner store feeling. And that's pretty special.

EATING CARNIVORE refers to a diet of strictly animal products. "It's basically just meat, butter and salt. Sometimes I'll do heavy cream in black tea or coffee. Once in a while I'll do bacon and eggs," Edie says. Her latest go-to? Ribeyes seared in a cast-iron pan: "Bring the steaks to room temp. Heat it over medium-high heat, and cook for three to five minutes on each side. It's superb."



Liver for two



Beef liver in store now for the new low price of \$5.89 per lb.

BACON, LIVER, AND POTATO HASH FOR TWO

Half pound beef liver, sliced
4 or 5 medium-size potatoes
1 or 2 onions, sliced
2 tbsp olive oil or beef tallow
4 slices bacon, cut in large pieces
1 tbsp flour
1 tsp paprika
7 oz. flat leaf parsley, rough chop
1/4 cup beef broth
4 tbsp sour cream

DID YOU KNOW?
Since the liver is the organ that filters impurities from the body, it is important to select high quality liver from cattle fed a clean healthy diet.

Quarter potatoes and simmer in salted water for 12 minutes or so. Drain. Heat fat in pan. Add potatoes and fry a few minutes until crispy. Remove and set aside. Add bacon and sliced onion to pan, sizzle and stir until crispy, about 3 or 4 minutes. Season the flour with the paprika, salt and black pepper, and use to coat liver. Fry liver in pan for 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Add potatoes back into pan to warm. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and place in serving dish. Pour broth into pan, scraping up crispy bits, allow to bubble for 1 to 2 minutes, then pour over liver and potatoes. Serve with sour cream and a dash of paprika.

Toward a more permanently rooted agriculture

Jesse Tack is program services manager for the Permaculture Institute of North America. Here's his follow-up to a wide-ranging podcast interview with Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate.

MIKE COVERED A LOT OF INFORMATION IN AN HOUR AND A HALF. WHAT STRUCK YOU AS THE KEY TAKEAWAY? The development of the local food market and regional food system that Mike is building. I love the model, and I love the idea of "let's start a fund and get it going everywhere." I hope to see it flourish and grow.

YOU MENTIONED BEING FROM A SMALL TOWN AND OBSERVING HOW THOSE TOWNS ARE IN DECLINE. IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT CAN CONSUMERS DO TO REVERSE THAT? I like what permaculture founder Bill Mollison said: "If only 10% will move into becoming producers, there will be enough." That is to say, produce some of your own food, capture some of your own water, produce some of your own lumber. And then of course, think about the power of your dollar — what you pay for and who you pay it to. Keep it local, and get to know your farmer.

IS AWARENESS OF PERMACULTURE INCREASING? WHAT ARE THE TRENDS THAT MAKE YOU OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE? Permaculture is on the rise, thanks to the internet and social media producing more and more evidence of regenerative solutions, alternative lifeways, and smarter resource management. For me, optimism comes from having a major set of solutions that keep me hopeful about the future. When you study permaculture, you end up learning about fungi solutions, water solutions, waste solutions, food solutions, building solutions, and on and on. Talking to people like Mike is also a huge source of inspiration for me.



Pikes Peak Permaculture will offer a comprehensive 10-month course starting in February of 2025. For details, visit PikesPeakPermaculture.org or email BluePlanetBecky@gmail.com.

*Matt Schniper's
Recipe of the Month*



In his ongoing recipe series for *Side Dish*, local food writer Matt Schniper highlights the Callicrate flank steak. This dish was created by David Cook, chef and owner of Gather Food Studio in Old Colorado City, offering fresh spices, condiments and cooking classes.

ROPA VIEJA
(Cuban style shredded beef with tomatoes)

- 1 1/2 to 2 pounds Callicrate Beef flank steak
- 2 red bell peppers, julienned
- 2 yellow peppers, julienned
- 1 red onion, julienned
- 1 jalapeño, cut in half lengthwise
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp. ground allspice
- 1/4 tsp. ground clove
- 5 whole sprigs fresh oregano
- 3 bay leaves
- 5 cloves garlic, rough chop
- 1 can (14-16 oz.) crushed tomato, fire roasted if possible
- 1 cup stuffed green olives with pimento, cut in half
- 2 tbsp capers
- 4 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 cup broth

Season flank steak with salt and pepper. Turn on a pressure cooker to the browning setting and add 1 tbsp olive oil. When oil is hot, brown the flank steak on both sides and remove. Now add the peppers, onion, jalapeno, cumin, paprika, allspice, clove, oregano, bay leaves, and garlic. Saute for 5-7 minutes or until the vegetables are soft. Add the tomato paste, crushed tomatoes, olives, capers and broth. Stir well to combine. Add the flank steak, making sure it is submerged. Place the top on the pressure cooker and set on high for 50 minutes. When the timer goes off and the pressure has released, open the cooker and remove the flank steak. Shred on a cutting board using a fork and return to the pressure cooker. With lid off, turn to saute setting and reduce the sauce til thickened, 5 to 10 minutes more.

Stores closed for New Year's Day.
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