

# Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

March 2024

**“Do something  
everyday  
that does not  
compute.”**

— Poet/Essayist  
Wendell Berry

**Customer  
Spotlight**

## ‘What a find it has been’

### HOW LONG HAVE YOU SHOPPED AT RANCH FOODS DIRECT?

(Tricia) It goes back to when we first moved here from Atlanta five or six years ago. That’s when we found it and what a find it has been! The highest quality meat — it is unsurpassed — and also instructions on how to cook it. The butchers know exactly what to tell you. It’s really terrific.

(Paul) We initially were stopping by whenever we had a special occasion, and then we found we were starting to create special occasions just because we wanted a reason to have a Ranch Foods Direct steak.

### WHAT ARE SOME OTHER FAVORITES?

(Tricia) Meat for pot roast. The London Broil is another cut that’s really delicious. I season it with a rub of oil, herbs and spices, and broil it, and then slice it on the bias. It takes about 15 minutes. I also come in for vegetables, soup, frozen items, and bread. The staff is always wonderful. In the summer I get local produce from One Eleven Neighborhood Farm (sold at Colorado Coffee Merchants as well as RFD.)

(Paul) I’ve noticed we’re both much better cooks when we start with meat from the Ranch Foods Direct shop.

### ANY TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING? (Tricia)

Just get back to basics, get back to locally grown meats and other foods. Support local artisans and local businesses. Keep them going strong. We don’t want something that came from China; we want to support local.



*Long-time customers Tricia and Paul Dusseault*

### WHY IS LOCAL SO IMPORTANT TO YOU?

We used to shop local when we lived in Atlanta, and we always thought it was important. We grew up with lots of local food in our homes, and we’ve just carried that with us. I grew up in Washington D.C., and Paul is from Coastal Florida. No matter where we are, we’re huge fans of local, just good, authentic food.

**Ranch Foods Direct has HIGH-QUALITY, HARD-TO-FIND SPECIALTY ITEMS LIKE ORGAN MEATS! One of the most versatile ways to add more organ meat to your diet is with the special ground beef blend that includes beef heart and liver for essential vitamins and minerals, a convenient product that can be substituted for regular ground beef in any dish. Bulk packs, \$6.79 per pound.**



**Celebrate St. Patrick’s in March with hand-made CORNED BEEF, the best in town. Various cuts and sizes available. Berkshire-cross HAMS available for Easter, coming up on March 31.**

# Callicrate tallow helps family grow natural skincare business



Vendor  
Spotlight

Brothers Lane, left, and Wyatt Harris, right, started Wild Ass Soap Company in 2020 to highlight the benefits of natural skincare products. RFD founder Mike Callicrate, center, supplies them with beef tallow.

**TELL US ABOUT HOW YOUR BUSINESS IS GOING:** We're trying to get trade shows lined up every weekend so we can do this full-time and transition out of the lawn and landscaping business we run with our dad. It's a lot more fun to get out and meet new people and see new places. The best part about it is helping people have a healthy alternative to not having chemicals on, or in, their body. That's really the best part of it. To see people with eczema, rough cracked skin, and stuff like that actually get the relief they need, and have a healthy all-natural alternative to store-bought chemicals, it's very rewarding. We're selling more soap than ever through the Ranch Foods Direct stores in Colorado Springs and St. Francis, Kansas. So that's been a great help to us. But we've also had an increase in online sales, particularly following last year's Nebraska State Fair.



Over the last year and a half, we've added some new products to our line-up, including beef tallow aluminum-free deodorants and beef tallow ranch balms, which are like lotion, only they actually absorb into your skin, with the additional benefit of containing healthy bioavailable vitamins. You can't go wrong with having well-moisturized skin! We also decided to make our own cologne, which we market as "200 proof all-grain body booze." This past year we also bought an enclosed trailer to use as a mobile store.

**WHAT HAS IT MEANT TO YOU TO BE PART OF A FAMILY OWNED AND OPERATED BUSINESS?** We've been involved in a family business our entire lives. We grew up working for our dad doing lawn care, so we've been entrepreneurs since the day we were born. We'll keep pushing to be self-made and independent.

Our younger brother and sister, twins Jax and Gemma are 13, and they're still in school, but they help cut soap and do other things we need like labeling and stickers. It's nice being able to keep everything we do in the family. After hiring people to help with our landscaping business over the years, now we're just trying different things to find out what suits our family best. For us, it's fun being a jack-of-all-trades rather than a master of one. We've had to teach ourselves lots of new skills, and we're always learning new things.

**YOUR FAMILY LIVES ON A SMALL FARM NEAR MCCOOK, NEBRASKA. DO YOU STILL GROW YOUR OWN HEMP?** The 2018 farm bill legalized hemp growing in all 50 states. After that, we started growing our own organic hemp, which is naturally extracted. We didn't grow any this past year, because we had enough oil on hand. When we need to replenish our stock, then we'll go ahead and grow more of our own organic CBD. That's the cool thing about all of our products — they are either being sourced from the area or we make them or grow them ourselves.

*Find tallow soaps in store now*





# Rethinking food system strategies

**K**ansan Brian Alexander is known as the “Red Hills Rancher” and host of the *Ranching Reboot* podcast. In February, he dropped episode 153 on the three-year anniversary of his weekly audio series, which now has more than 500 regular subscribers. Here he talks about how he got into podcasting, what he’s hoping to accomplish and why one of his most frequent and popular guests is fellow rancher and Ranch Foods Direct founder Mike Callicrate.

## **YOU’VE FEATURED MIKE CALLICRATE ON YOUR SHOW.**

**TELL US ABOUT THAT.** I’ve had him on four or five times. Mike always has something to say, he’s well-spoken and he can back up his viewpoints. It’s good to hear from someone who’s been fighting the fight to reform agriculture since the 1980s and sees the problems in the industry. What I really love about Mike is his passion and dedication to building community food systems. Not just in Colorado Springs where he has his main stores, but in rural areas like St. Francis, Kansas, a town of 1,000 people surrounded by feedlots and crop ground and cows. He’s having good success because he’s differentiating his product from what’s in the mainstream grocery stores. That’s an important theme we talk about on the podcast: differentiating your specialty regenerative product, one you’ve grown with love and care and consideration, from a hyper-processed product that’s completely untraceable as to where it came from.

**ANY KEY THINGS YOU’VE LEARNED FROM HIM?** He’s given me some really great advice about the beef business and the packing industry. I really started talking to him a lot right as COVID shut down the world, because I saw an immediate need when the big processors started slowing down. For me, it was, “hey, this should be a wake-up call for everybody that there’s not enough excess processing capacity in the system.” With everything so interconnected, if there’s a disturbance in one part of the system, we can shift capacity around, but when we have a nationwide problem, that creates serious supply shortages further down the line.

**WHY DID YOU START THE PODCAST?** A good friend put me up to it. I was getting bored during COVID. I couldn’t get out and be around the people who energize me socially. And one of the things I really missed was some of the conversations you’d have in the hallway at conferences. That’s what I wanted to try to re-create in a podcast format. My tagline is “rebooting your thinking about farming, ranching, food systems and the people who operate them.” I don’t want to tell you what to think, I want to give you some alternatives that maybe you haven’t thought about before. I don’t necessarily target an audience. I make the content I enjoy making, by having conversations with people I enjoy having conversations with.

**FUTURE TOPIC YOU’D LIKE TO EXPLORE?** I’m concerned about A.I. entering commodity trading. When that happens, when we get commodity trading bots, we lose price discovery. It’s an arms race right now to develop faster and faster trading. We’ve already seen it in the stock market, and I think it will affect agriculture more and more going forward.

## Did you know?

Research conducted at the University of Chicago shows that a fatty acid found in beef, lamb and dairy products could help the immune system fight cancerous tumors. The long-chain fatty acid called trans-vaccenic acid (TVA) improves the ability of certain T cells to kill cancerous or virally infected cells, according to the study, suggesting TVA might be used as a nutritional supplement to benefit ill patients.



Listen on podcasting platforms or at [RedHillsRancher.com](http://RedHillsRancher.com).

## Biochar improves nutrient uptake

An ancient soil amendment – biochar – could be a promising tool for future soil health enhancement and maintenance, according to a study by the Texas A&M Department of Horticultural Sciences. Department Head Amit Dhingra, who led the experiment on tomatoes, said biochar improved the soil microbiome and plant root interactions with a wide spectrum of beneficial microorganisms. Biochar’s highly porous, carbon-rich characteristics facilitated enhanced water and nutrient exchange and showed potential to decrease soil acidification. “There was evidence the plant and microbiome were able to communicate better and modulate their function in the presence of biochar,” he said. “That modulation is important as the plant’s nutritional needs are known to change as the plant matures.”



*Biochar soil amendments available in store*

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