

# Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

April 2024

“Life is short but art is eternal.”

— Victorian era painter Evelyn de Morgan

## A bare wall blooms

Brian and Chanel Sachtleben, the visionary duo behind C Positive B Positive, recently transformed the west wall of the Fillmore store into their own creative interpretation of a barnyard scene. It’s the largest painting project the couple has embarked on so far and also their first landscape.

“We really wanted it to look peaceful,” Chanel says. “And welcoming,” Brian adds. The ribboned pastoral is a play on the couple’s uniquely melded personal style: geometric abstracts in kaleidoscopic cheer-inducing colors.

Prior to the commission, the artists were already regulars at the store, stopping by often to visit the hot soup bar. One day Brian struck up a conversation with the staff that led into a serious discussion about the long-dreamed-of mural project, conceived by RFD butcher Joanna Hooper. Recalls Brian, “I’d stopped getting food at the regular grocery store and was getting everything from Ranch Foods Direct. But the soups are what got me. I had to meet the man who made them, just so I could tell him they are the best soups I’ve had in my life.”

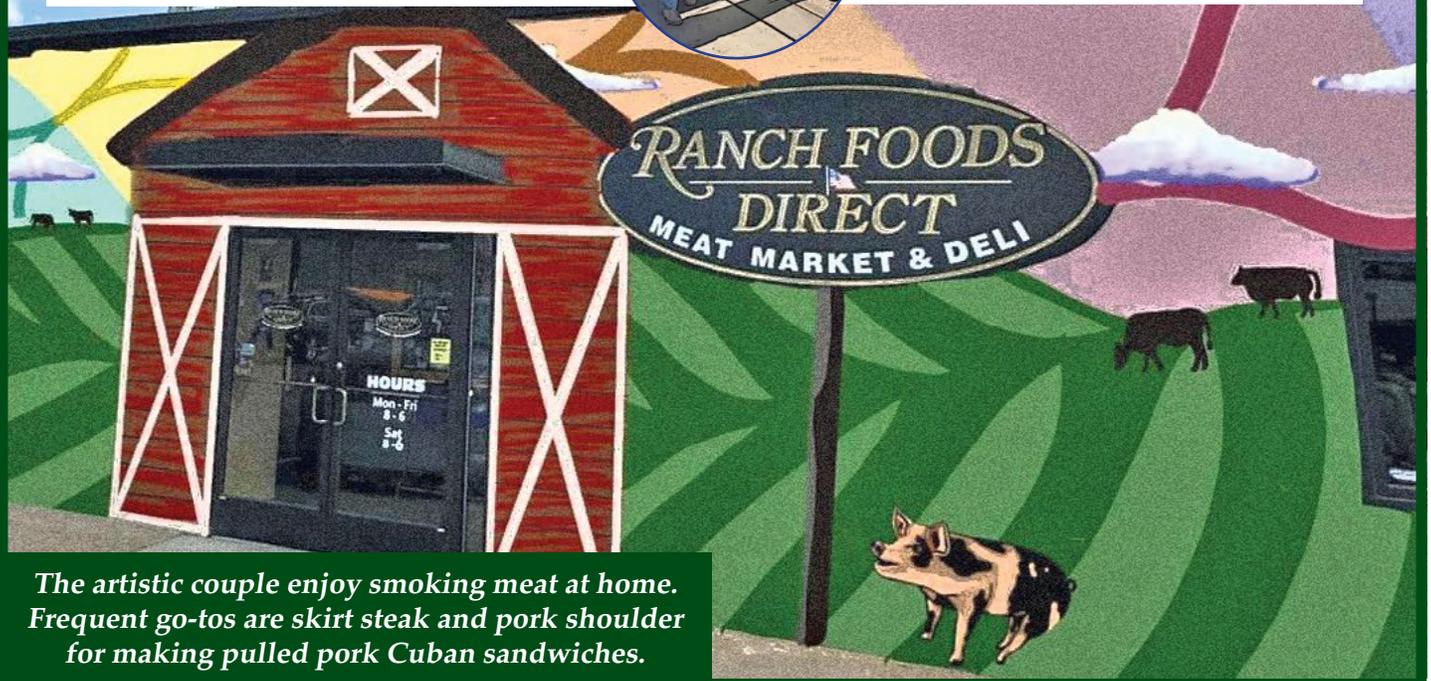
## Local muralists give Fillmore store a colorful makeover

Brian and Chanel grew up near Miami, Florida. Neither attended formal art school but gradually originated their own distinct style. They’ve now done more than a dozen murals in Colorado and beyond.

“We’ve started to realize the Springs is becoming a little more artsy since we moved here in 2017,” Brian says. “At first we did a lot of work in Denver and out of town. Lately we’ve been doing more work in the Springs and Pueblo.” The social benefit is coming into focus for local businesses. “I think having a mural on the store will bring in a whole new round of customers who never noticed the building before. Art creates a sense of community. It brings people together.”



**FAVORITE PRODUCTS?** Adrian’s premade meals. Big B’s spiced apple cider. Pet food. (They have two cats.) The living lettuce (“it stays good for weeks!”) Most purchased item: Wagyu brisket burger patties.



The artistic couple enjoy smoking meat at home. Frequent go-tos are skirt steak and pork shoulder for making pulled pork Cuban sandwiches.



## Prepping for the future

*Richard Carpenter co-directs the culinary program at Pikes Peak State College, a position he's held for the past decade after a long career as a gifted pastry chef. He and his students recently held a fundraising dinner featuring Callicrate Beef.*

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR COLLABORATION WITH RANCH FOODS DIRECT AND HOW IT ENHANCES STUDENT TRAINING:** Ranch Foods Direct offers internships in meat fabrication. This role is vitally important to chefs who need to understand various cuts of meat, choosing the best cooking method for a particular cut and knowing where the meat comes from. Being able to purchase larger primal cuts of meat and fabricate it yourself can add value and make it more profitable for chefs. Customers are also interested in knowing how their meat was produced and how the animals were cared for.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF YOUR CULINARY PROGRAM?** We provide individual instruction for our students. Our lab classes are capped at 18 students and all labs are fully equipped with the latest commercial equipment. We also provide day and evening classes to serve students who may be working full-time and are active duty or retired military students.

**ANY EXCITING TRENDS YOU SEE, SUCH AS MORE LOCAL SOURCING?** My latest goal at the college is to teach students how to prepare alternative cuts of meat. After a recent conversation with (RFD owner) Mike Callicrate, I realized that we don't focus enough on braising, stewing, and other slow-cook methods.

*"The Callicrate strip loin was amazing. It's an honor to have the opportunity to work with meat of this quality."  
— Chef Richard Carpenter*

I personally would choose a braised short rib, served in the dark, rich liquid sauce it was cooked in, over a grilled steak anytime. But a perfect chuck roast that's tender, flavorful and appealing takes time, technique, and patience.

*Richard recommends cold-pressed sunflower oil as a healthy fat for emulsified dressings and vinaigrettes.*

We think it's valuable to encourage students to work in the industry while attending our program. Our internship program includes over 70 local businesses and continues to grow. Sourcing local food is a trend I believe will continue. During the growing season, our chefs travel to area farms.

**DESCRIBE A GREAT DISH YOU'VE MADE LATELY:** Cuban inspired pork loin marinated in orange and lime juice, garlic, sea salt, coriander seeds, and cumin. After marinating, it was rubbed with a paste of fresh garlic, salt and pepper, then roasted at 325 degrees until it reached an internal temp of 140. (I pulled it at 132 to account for carry-over cooking.) I served it with black beans, cilantro lime rice and fried plantains. It's a favorite from the time I lived in Miami.



# Beloved Pueblo chiles will only grow if the water flows

## Spotlight on Local

Carl Musso has grown hundreds of exotic peppers from all over the world in a special chile garden adjacent to the family's farm stand east of Pueblo.

It's a project he started 12 years ago to demonstrate the area's preeminence as a pepper-growing paradise. Specimens from Peru, Venezuela, Thailand and Africa all thrived in his garden last year, identified with names like Blazing Banana, Purple UFO and Tiger Jalapeno. Many of these varieties are tropical. But he's yet to find one that won't grow in Southern Colorado.

Pueblo is a pepper mecca, known for its upright facing chiles (or marisols) that reach toward the sun. Its soil and climate is well-suited to many other kinds of produce too, including onions, melons and sweet corn. None of these crops will grow without irrigation water, however, and water is increasingly diverted to large urban areas, putting this productive agrarian landscape at risk. The Musso family provides context on what's at stake in a new documentary film produced by the Colorado Springs-based Palmer Land Conservancy. So does Mike Bartolo, who grew up on the same mesa and went on to become an esteemed chile pepper breeder responsible for developing several popular varieties. Today he avoids driving certain roads because of the emotion it stirs up when he sees once productive farms no longer used to grow food. "It is just too painful," is how he puts it. Years ago

he attempted to buy a neighboring farm he greatly admired, only to be outbid by someone who removed it from agricultural production entirely. "That's a regret I'll take to my grave," he has said. So while the Front Range booms, rural areas like the lower Arkansas are feeling the strain. As Bartolo says, "We can grow crops, or we can grow houses."

*Roasted Pueblo chiles are offered for sale year-round in the freezer section at Ranch Foods Direct.*

## Did you know?

The latest Ag Census shows the U.S. lost 140,000 farms over the past five years.



Carl Musso and son Rocky

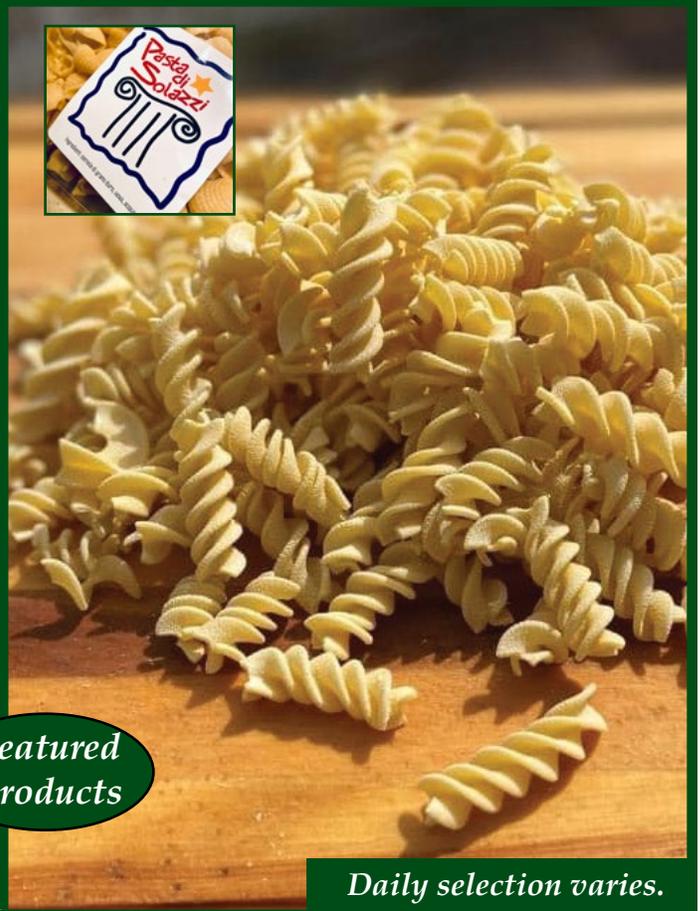
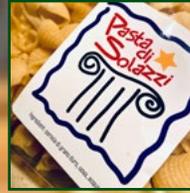
Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate got a sneak peak at Palmer's new film. "It shows the importance of keeping the water tied to the land," he says. Current law allows water rights to be sold off separately, with impacts that extend beyond the Arkansas Valley. "The consumption of water by the Front Range is preventing the recharge of the Ogallala Aquifer, because the river no longer gets all the way to the state line. We're draining it dry," he observes. "We've got to have policy that protects farming from development. Get rid of food monopolies and rebuild local infrastructure. Make it a requirement that all government entities prioritize local food purchasing at the full cost of production, including a profit back to the farm."

The Palmer Land Conservancy will host the Colorado premiere of the film, *Marisol: Looking at the Sun*, at 5:30 p.m. April 25 at the Sangre de Cristo Arts Center in downtown Pueblo. More screenings follow in Colorado Springs, Denver and Salida. Full schedule and trailer at [MirasolFilm.com](http://MirasolFilm.com)



## Back in store

Two Italian classics are back in stock at Ranch Foods Direct. Sepay Groves olive oil comes directly from the oldest producer of Tuscan-style olives in Northern California's Suisun Valley. The high-phenolic oil is third-party tested and sold within a year of harvest. Combine it with fresh pastas and sauces made locally at a commercial kitchen in Colorado Springs by multigenerational family-owned company Pasta di Solazzi. The pastas are extruded through traditional bronze dies for an authentically rustic texture.



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Products*

*Daily selection varies.*

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