

APRIL 2026



# Community Profiles

"I'd like to paint the way a bird sings."

— the artist Claude Monet



## Animal care advocate

**W**idely respected for her groundbreaking research on animal behavior, Dr. Temple Grandin helped lay a foundation for humane livestock handling at Callicrate Cattle Company by providing training and consulting on facility design more than two decades ago. Now in her late 70s, the revered Colorado State University professor continues to travel the country advocating for improved animal welfare. While technology has changed, the basics of good handling she pioneered over her 50-year career still apply. "AI is not going to replace stockmanship," she said in a recent interview. Here's more from that conversation.



**YOU'VE CONSULTED WITH THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY FOR MANY YEARS. HOW HAS YOUR MESSAGE BEEN RECEIVED? ARE STANDARDS AND AWARENESS IMPROVING?**

Cattle handling in the 1970s was terrible, and that's a thing that has really improved. When I first started in the '70s, only ten percent of people with cattle were even thinking about doing it right. Now I would say it's more like 80 percent.

**WHAT ROLE DID CONSUMER DEMAND PLAY? IT WASN'T REALLY A FACTOR AT FIRST, RIGHT?**

No, it didn't change because of consumers. It changed because in the beginning I emphasized economic benefits such as safety, weight gain, better conception rates on artificial insemination and better meat quality. I used those economic things to push good cattle handling. Now you have all kinds of seminars in cattle handling. When I first started none of that existed.

**SO WHAT DO YOU SEE FOR THE FUTURE OF HUMANELY RAISED MEAT PRODUCTS?**

I think you're going to end up having a two-tiered market. You'll have your specialty niches, which will probably be more expensive, and then you'll have large scale commercial. The problem with large scale commercial is when it breaks, you're in trouble. If it's big, it's fragile. Now it is cheaper, simply because of the economics of the feed. I remember when the big pig industry took off and it was like they had some secret proprietary thing. I'll tell you what it was. Trains unloading at a giant feed mill. You could see them from the road. As a feedlot, you can save 30 percent or more when you buy train cars of grain rather than buying it down at the local feed store.

**ARE YOU SAYING THE COMPANIES THAT BECAME DOMINANT IN THE MARKET WERE PRETENDING TO HAVE SOMETHING PROPRIETARY?**

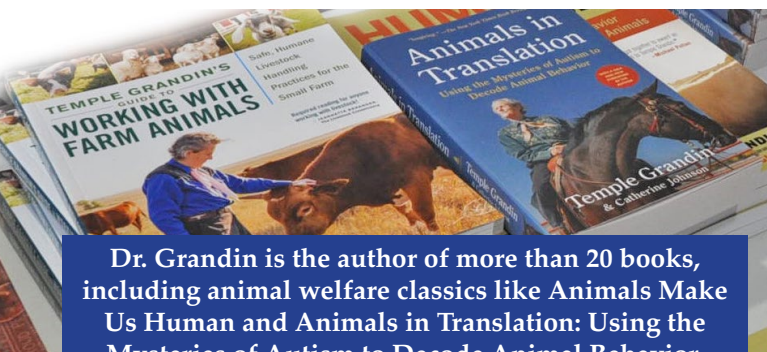
Well, people thought it was. But it wasn't. The thing was the small guy couldn't compete on the feed costs. When you buy trainloads of grain you've got economies of scale there. But if it breaks, you're in trouble. Look at what happened during Covid. When two big plants shut down — I did a paper on this — you had to dispose of 100,000 head of pigs. They got thrown away because you couldn't process them. That's totally terrible. With a more distributed supply chain, it's more expensive, but it's also more robust. It doesn't break as easily.

**IS THE SOLUTION TO KNOW YOUR RANCHER?**

I think there will be a big market for ranch-to-retail, and we need more small slaughter establishments. And one of the ways to get started are these modular systems [Callicrate Cattle Co was a leader in installing and designing these units.] Legally they're trailers and that solves a lot of the regulatory issues. Even if you park them and they never move, legally they're trailers. So you can get started with a small plant much cheaper with these modular units than you can with bricks-and-mortar.

**WHAT WELFARE ISSUES ARE YOU MOST CONCERNED ABOUT RIGHT NOW?**

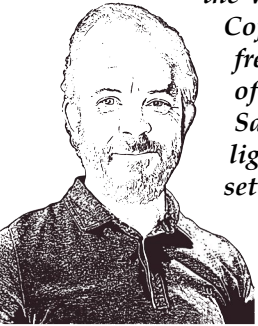
Cattle handling has really gotten better, but I'm concerned about breeding. We're breeding for rapid weight gain and a few specific meat traits, but we're getting crooked feet in cattle, we're getting more congestive heart failure. I'm equally critical of pet breeding. We're breeding cats with joints that break, pugs that can't breathe, and some of these other extreme-type things. These problems happen because they've crept up slowly. I call that bad becoming normal. When it creeps up slowly, people don't realize it's happening until it gets really serious.



Dr. Grandin is the author of more than 20 books, including animal welfare classics like *Animals Make Us Human* and *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior*.

# In bold letters: let's elevate local

**L**ooking for an inviting patio on a sunny day or warm evening? May 1st marks one year since Tim Hines and his wife Monse replaced what was previously the Wild Goose Meeting House with The Best Coffee and Lounge. Artful coffee drinks and fresh smoothies made with real fruit (one of the unique touches that reflect Monse's Salvadoran heritage) are served up with light bites in a comfortable indoor-outdoor setting on eclectic North Tejon. The couple also operates Monse's Taste of El Salvador and are busy renovating two other locations, each with a distinct personality. Here, Tim shares more.



## TELL US MORE ABOUT THE COFFEE SHOP.

There's a lot of coffee places around, but we wanted to focus on the lounge aspect. We wanted to create a casual environment where people can stop in who just want a quick business meeting or to celebrate a birthday without renting a place, just a relaxing atmosphere where you can get a cocktail or wine or non-alcoholic drink. The age range is everybody. We coordinate with local musicians to offer live jazz on the first and third Saturdays, and free salsa classes on Friday night. Those are open to anybody who walks by. It's fun.



## IS IT SAFE TO SAY YOU'RE A FAN OF RANCH FOODS DIRECT?

I'm a fan of Ranch Foods Direct in big, bold letters. It's the community focus. I think Mike does a great job with his brand. But it's not just about a quality product, it's the quality of a local person that supports local. I can tell we have Mike's support. He eats with us, he sends his team to check on us. That's part of the story of what community means. People are the key ingredient. That's true in any industry. And that's what's missing in the corporate world. It's too standardized and focused on convenience, without necessarily investing back in the customer experience. A lot of tourists come through this city, and they like to know what's local. I drop the Ranch Foods Direct name all the time. I tell them to go to the website and check out all the businesses that Ranch Foods Direct supports. Those are the places they'll want to go to get a taste of the true local flavor.



## WHAT'S THE STATUS OF YOUR OTHER CONCEPTS?

We're so grateful for the support we've had for the pupuseria in Old Colorado City. That's really been our flagship. It's kind of a unique building layout, and we've repurposed the west side of it in several different ways, including using it as an incubator for other local businesses or as an admin area. We wanted to expand the dessert and drink menu with smoothies and other fresh drinks, so we turned it into a grab-and-go area. For the drinks, Monse is using some fun molds, cold foam, popping pearls for boba and things like that. We also do cake by the slice. Everything is made in-house, and it's all 100 percent gluten free.

The Saigon Cafe downtown has been closed for renovations for the last 11 months. We didn't expect it to be that long, but we wanted to take our time and do it right. We're converting it into a second Monse's with a whole new vibe, hopefully launching by early June. It will be another location to get Monse's great food, but we hope people will enjoy the blend of elevated atmosphere with cultural awareness. We're bringing in artwork and style and design from Latin locations around the world. It will have a tropical feel, lots of wood, stone and other neat elements. We plan to highlight the locals we've been working with on that. And right behind that project is a full makeover of the old Mountain Shadows in Old Colorado City. The building itself will be a complete transformation, with an elevated cabin feel. We hope to have it done by the end of year.

Monse, left, got her start sampling and selling pupusas at the original Ranch Foods Direct store on El Paso. Now she and her husband Tim operate several popular standalone restaurants.



# Water crisis deepens

The warmest winter on record in Colorado and surrounding states could have potential impacts for farmers, ranchers and food producers stretching into the summer.

Following an outbreak of massive wildfires in Nebraska, many ranchers are concerned about reduced hay supplies in the region, said Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate. "We buy hay year-round, mostly sorghum hay. The Nebraska fires burned up a lot of grass so that area will need more hay. It's really an epic monumental disaster up there," he said.

At Callicrate Cattle Company, cows normally graze on mixed forages in the spring, which might not be available this year. "It's a worry. It doesn't look good at all," he said.

Lack of rainfall and surface water isn't the only problem. Groundwater is running short in many areas of the plains due to over-pumping.

At a water meeting Mike attended in late March, graphs showed the underground aquifer has declined by more than 90 feet in some areas.

"At St. Francis, Kansas, the water table has dropped by 75 feet," Mike said. "In some wells, there's only 10 feet of water left in the hole, and it's undrinkable."

For Colorado to meet its contractual water-sharing obligations with neighboring Kansas and Nebraska, the Republican River watershed in the northeastern corner will be forced to permanently retire 25,000 acres of irrigated crop production by 2029. But Mike has long said even more drastic action is needed: the immediate suspension of all irrigation and replacement of crop fields with grass or drought-hardy grains like barley to feed livestock. "This is precious fossilized water underground," he said. "When we use it up, it's gone."



## Warm, dry conditions set new records

- The warmest winter on record for Colorado and neighboring states continued through March
- According to Russ Schumacher, Colorado's state climatologist, western Colorado's drought is among the worst in the country. Many communities are already imposing water use restrictions.
- The Arkansas River basin that provides water to produce farms in Pueblo and the Arkansas Valley received less than half the normal snowpack through the first three months of the year
- In March, new heat records were set around the globe and Arctic ice shrank to a new recorded low, with potential to influence the jetstream and the overall climate in ways not fully understood



# Featured Recipe

## Miso Pork Belly With Maple Glaze



Recipe by Chef Ian Dedrickson  
Co-owner of Ephemera

This recipe requires one to two days for the full preparation, and another 20 minutes to heat before serving. Chef Ian recommends serving the pork with a white bean puree, and brushing or spooning the maple glaze over the pork. To make the glaze, combine one cup maple syrup with one cup of braising liquid from the pork and 2 tsp. crushed red pepper. In a small saucepan, bring to a simmer and reduce over medium heat to a syrupy consistency. Reserve in fridge until ready to serve. Season to taste, adding more syrup if it seems too salty.



### HOW TO MAKE THE PORK BELLY

- 1 half-slab Callicrate Pork Belly (skin off; roughly 5 lbs., which will reduce by at least a pound after cooking, feeding between 4-6 people)
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 1 large carrot
- 4-5 whole bay leaves
- 3-4 celery stalks
- 6-8 whole cloves of garlic (lightly crushed or chopped)
- 1 C. salt
- 1 C. light brown sugar
- 3-4 sprigs rosemary (chopped)
- 2 Tbsp. ground coriander
- 4-5 Tbsp. ground black pepper
- ½ C. yellow miso paste

With a sharp knife, score the entire skin (fatty) side of the pork belly in a ¼-inch crossing pattern. Combine salt, sugar, rosemary, coriander, pepper, and miso in a mixing bowl to form a sand-like paste, and thoroughly coat the scored belly with it. Place in fridge overnight in a pan; the belly will release a lot of liquid, so make sure the pan can hold it. The next day, remove belly from pan and discard all liquid. Gently rinse remaining mixture from belly in the sink. Preheat oven to 350°F. Rough chop all vegetables to roughly 1-in x 1-in pieces. Heat a large skillet, pan or griddle over medium-low heat. (Ensure enough room for a significant amount of fat to render.) Carefully lay the belly in the pan, fat side down, and render for 5-7 minutes, or until a deep golden brown is uniform on the fat side. Don't turn up the heat so high it creates smoke; low and slow is best. Turn the belly over and sear the meat side for a minute or two until golden brown.

Place seared belly in a baking pan with plenty of extra room for water. Add all chopped vegetables and fill pan with water until belly is almost submerged, with a little of the fat side protruding above the surface. Place the pan, covered, in the oven for 2.5 to 3.5 hours, or until the belly pulls apart easily with a fork or tongs.

Remove pan from oven, and carefully remove belly from liquid to a new baking sheet using two pairs of tongs or large spatulas. Transfer carefully, since it will be hot and delicate. Allow to cool. Reserve at least one cup of liquid for making a glaze (recipe included at left.) Either discard remaining liquid or strain it and keep in the fridge for up to a week or freeze. When cool, cut belly into serving size portions. When ready, reheat them in a 350-degree oven, skin side down to crisp up (10 to 15 minutes). Serve with white bean puree and topped with maple glaze. (Recipe at left.)



# Spring into Flavor with Bratwurst



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**DID YOU KNOW?** ... Farm bankruptcies rose 46 percent in 2025, even though meat and grocery prices are high. The reason? Farmers get less than six cents of every dollar consumers spend on food, based on the latest economic data, while their production costs continue to soar. Help a farmer: buy local, buy direct.

## Community Profiles

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