

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

December 2023

“Our ancestors answered the question of what to do when the sun seemed lost by making the season a holy celebration of life.”
 — Michael Judge,
 “The Dance of Time”

Tis the season to shop local

MIKE CALLICRATE, WHAT EXTRA STEPS CAN PEOPLE TAKE TO SUPPORT THEIR LOCAL MEAT PRODUCER? Because we raise the animal, we must sell the whole animal, so it helps if people take advantage of the CowPool option or buy more ground beef and other cuts in addition to steaks, which make up less than 20% of the carcass. Also, ask your local school district, rest home, hospital or other care provider to consider sourcing ground beef from us. Our burger meat is the highest possible quality, full of healthy fat, with no low-quality imports, waste fat, or pink slime. Just high-quality beef from a single source.

NAME SOMETHING THAT GIVES YOU HOPE FOR THE FUTURE: Shovel Ready at The Well is an apprenticeship program that serves our ground beef and pork, and they understand why that’s important. These young culinarians are learning, not just culinary skills, but why they should care about their local food system. Conventional culinary programs don’t teach that. As a result the students get disconnected from how food is produced. We need more community-oriented programs like this.

WHAT’S YOUR ALL-TIME FAVORITE NON-MEAT HOLIDAY FOOD? My mom’s traditional plum pudding with vanilla sauce

HOLIDAY RETAIL HOURS:

Ranch Foods Direct will be open regular hours (8-6) on Saturday, Dec. 23 and Saturday, Dec 30 at both locations; CLOSED Dec. 25 and January 1 for the holidays.



Mike at left with members of the Shovel Ready culinary training program



Soap maker puts Christmas in a bar



These special CleanRD brand soaps are a Ranch Foods Direct exclusive!



Blake Beyers strives for “luscious bubbles, creamy lather, and supreme hydration” in his original soap formulations which feature Callicrate beef tallow as the foundational ingredient. “We believe we’ve accomplished our mission in creating the perfect bar of soap,” he says. Many of his customers claim the tallow-based bars have cleared up eczema and other dry skin conditions, even when prescription soaps have failed.

Special gift boxes are available throughout the holiday season.

WHICH SOAPS ARE YOUR MOST POPULAR SO FAR? Aloe, Tobacco and Amber, “Lump of Coal” and Christmas Cheer. I have not been able to keep these in stock due to high demand. They are the first to go at every holiday bazaar, through online orders, and at Ranch Foods Direct. Lump of Coal makes a great stocking stuffer — it’s a charcoal bar scented with sandalwood and sage. It has a pumice powder throughout the bar that acts as an exfoliant. Christmas Cheer, as the name implies, is Christmas in a bar. It sold out in one week of hitting the shelves!

WHAT DO YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT TALLOW-BASED SOAP? Tallow contains vitamins A, D, K, and E and antioxidants which can be absorbed through the skin. To be able to take hundreds of pounds of tallow, something that would otherwise be considered waste, and turn it into soap feels so liberating, especially in a world that has gotten so off course in terms of sustainable practices. We have designed a tallow-based soap recipe that is extremely creamy, cleansing, and moisturizing — not an easy mission to accomplish.

WHAT FOODS DO YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO AT THE HOLIDAYS? WHAT MEAT WOULD BE YOUR FIRST CHOICE FOR THE HOLIDAY TABLE? I look forward to pumpkin pie made with fresh pumpkin from my own backyard. I love pumpkin pie! I’m from Arkansas and grew up on roast beef and potatoes; I absolutely love the rich flavor and tenderness of Ranch Foods Direct cross-rib roast. It will make a memorable centerpiece for my family gathering.

HAVE YOU READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY THAT GAVE YOU INSIGHT OR INSPIRATION? *12 Rules for Life* by Jordan Peterson. It absolutely blew my mind. I love philosophical books. They keep me grounded and remind me that the world doesn’t revolve around me.

Year end reflections from a local food scribe

Matthew Schniper is an award-winning journalist, food writer and long-time contributor to the Colorado Springs Independent. This year he launched Side Dish With Schniper, a must-read newsletter covering the local food scene. (SideDishSchnip.Substack.com)



YOU'VE TEAMED UP WITH GATHER FOOD STUDIO TO FEATURE DIFFERENT RANCH FOODS DIRECT PRODUCTS EACH MONTH. ANY NEW FAVORITES TO COME OUT OF THAT COLLABORATION?

October's chuck roast Carbonnade recipe — I can't get enough of it! I've bought various meat cuts over many years of shopping at RFD, but this recipe really spotlights the chuck roast beautifully.

WHAT HOLIDAY FOODS DO YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON?

I grew up with Hanukkah and a lot of wonderful Jewish foods like matzo ball soup and potato latkes. Latkes are always a favorite, and we have some awesome family recipes for both traditional and a modern sweet potato variant. Last month's Gather recipe for citrus-herb roasted turkey was also outstanding!

AS AN AWARD-WINNING WRITER AND JOURNALIST, WHERE DO YOU TURN FOR NEW IDEAS AND INSPIRATION IN THE WORLD OF FOOD?

International travel has always been a source of inspiration, and I've been fortunate enough to visit dozens of countries dating back to my first backpacking trip through Europe. But even domestic travel can unlock some cool finds, such as a regional interpretation of a dish. I always love seeing a new cuisine arrive in the Springs, like when

Uchenna first brought Ethiopian to town. We need that diversity. There's a great Substack I read called *The Food Section*, which covers culture in the Southeastern U.S., which is where I grew up (in Alabama). I'm a longtime Michael Pollan fan, and it's not recent, but I always recommend Dan Barber's *The Third Plate* for a welcome perspective on sustainable food systems — which of course fits the Ranch Foods Direct ethos.

WHAT TRENDS STAND OUT TO YOU AFTER COVERING THE LOCAL FOOD SCENE THIS PAST YEAR?

Sadly I see consumers in the Springs continue to embrace chain food rather than prioritizing support of small, local independent spots. The growth along Interquest Parkway is one example. My long term concern is nationwide homogeneity such that wherever you travel you find the same corporate brands, as mom and pops disappear. Part of that trend relates to what most of those chains are serving: not-good-for-you food with lower quality ingredients that do nothing to support small farmers, ranchers and producers. The whole model is broken and has been for a long time, as RFD owner Mike Callicrate has shared in various ways over his many years of political activism. We talk about some of this in the State of Plate podcast I made last year, which featured Mike as a guest. Links for newcomers are available on my Substack page.

Pueblo Chile Garlic Mashers

5 large Yukon Gold potatoes
5 or more red or green Pueblo chiles
3 or more cloves garlic
1 cup milk
2 tbsps butter
Salt and pepper to taste

Peel garlic and remove stems and seeds from roasted, frozen, peeled chiles. Chop garlic and chile peppers together and let stand for 10 minutes. Heat olive oil in skillet at medium heat. Add garlic-chile mixture to skillet turning heat to low. Sauté for several minutes, taking care not to brown or burn the garlic. Set aside chiles and garlic and boil potatoes with skins on until soft. Strain potatoes and transfer to mixing bowl. Add milk and butter, chile-garlic, and hand mash to desired texture. Season with salt and pepper.

Recipe courtesy of Pueblo Seed and Food, a Ranch Foods Direct supplier of beautifully packaged whole grain products grown and harvested in Colorado

Now open Fridays 12-6 and Saturdays 7:30-5 in their own beautiful new shop in downtown Cortez

Biscochitos *A keto cookie!*

1 pound Callicrate rendered pork fat
at room temperature
2 1/2 cups sugar
3 large eggs
3 teaspoon anise extract
6 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place rendered pork fat and 1 1/2 cups of sugar in a mixing bowl. Using a handheld mixer on medium speed, cream together for 2 minutes, until light and fluffy. Mix in the eggs and anise. In a separate mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt until evenly mixed.



Combine the two mixtures together and gently knead to form a dough. Use a floured rolling pin on a lightly floured surface to roll 1/4-inch thick. Cut out cookies and transfer to an ungreased baking sheet 1/2 inch apart. Bake in preheated oven for 10-12 minutes, or until golden. While cookies bake, mix together the remaining 1 cup of sugar with the spices in a shallow bowl. Dredge cookies in sugar and cool on a wire rack.

THANKS for making Ranch Foods Direct part of your fun and festive holiday season!

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