

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

December 2024

“Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chain stores.”

— George Monbiot

Looking to the future of sustainable food and nutrition

This fall UCCS Director of Nutrition and Dietetics Sean Svette brought ten students from his Sustainable Food Systems Management graduate course to tour the Peak to Plains Food Hub. “It’s important for me to share what I know in the local food system space and bring them out to see what’s going on in our community. Ranch Foods Direct is a big part of that,” he explained. “It’s so inspirational seeing the passion and the vision Mike has for the future.” To find out more about the student’s reactions to the tour, see page 2.



Owner Mike Callicrate kicked off the tour by describing how the food system transitioned away from being locally based. He talked about his first job working in the meat department at a grocery store in Evergreen, Colorado, where the department manager made a good living for his family. Gradually, however, people came to rely less on food grown in their local foodshed and more on food being transported thousands of miles, while farmers were paid a smaller percentage of every dollar spent on food. “We need to be willing to go backwards into the future,” he said.

“We need to go back to seeing food as a wealth-creating enterprise. Right now, people are going out of business to feed us.” He added, “It’s not just about paying more for food, it’s about who gets that money, and what the monopolies are doing to push out smaller companies.”

After explaining how unique it is that Ranch Foods Direct utilizes every part of the carcass, he handed the group off to Chef Nate for a visit to the carcass cooler and in-house kitchen, where he makes bone broth, jerky and other specialty products. Relocalizing meat production is important because “the Amazon rainforest is being clear-cut so beef can be raised there, instead of us raising it here in the U.S.,” he said. Mike wrapped up the tour by talking about the challenges and opportunities, saying there’s too much lobbying and not enough anti-trust enforcement, but it’s still worth striving to build a new and better food system. “It takes a lot of work and a lot of capital, and you can’t afford to make any mistakes,” he said. “But I’m hoping when you leave here today, you’ll consider being part of a different kind of food system. It’s hard, but we can do it. We’re here to build a model we can replicate.”



Local students reflect on what future holds

Grad students share a little about themselves and their future ambitions after touring the Peak to Plains Food Hub



Leah

WHERE SHE'S FROM: Pueblo

IMPRESSIONS OF THE STORE: I'd like to shop here more often. I'm glad I got introduced. The meat looks so pretty. Visually you can tell it's better quality compared to the regular grocery store.

FOOD RELATED EXPERIENCE: I volunteered to help plant garlic at New Roots Farm in Canon City recently. Currently I'm serving an internship with Pueblo District 60 nutritional services department, and I'm hoping to do an internship with the Pueblo Food Project next year.

FUTURE AMBITIONS: Pueblo is a small community, so I've gotten to know a few of the farmers, but I haven't really understood the importance of supporting them like what I'm learning about today. I didn't necessarily think I would go back to Pueblo after graduation, but now I'm more enthusiastic about returning to my community and serving it in some way.

WHERE SHE'S FROM: Florida.

FOOD RELATED EXPERIENCE: I have a really good friend, and she and her family live on ten acres and raise their own beef. She and her husband turned it into a business they can do with their kids. They both work other jobs, but it's something they do on the side that is very beneficial for their kids and community.

FUTURE AMBITIONS: I came into this program being very open-minded and just wanting to see what's out there. I love that I'm getting exposed to so many different things. I came into this thinking I might do medical nutritional therapy or functional nutrition. I would love to work with cancer or diabetic patients, helping them improve their health, but now that I've been exposed to other things, I want to delve into those too. I just think food plays such a huge role in a person's health and overall well-being. People are getting fed-up with being pumped full of medicines that are masking what's really going on, which might be nutritional deficiencies or metabolism problems. That's what I'm super-excited to learn more about.



Kim

Emma



WHERE SHE'S FROM: Washington State.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE STORE: I found out about Ranch Foods Direct when I was at a low-carb convention. I don't eat keto or carnivore myself, but I wanted to learn more about why people do and the therapeutic lifestyles that are out there, because I know it can be very beneficial for disease treatment. I met the representatives from Real Salt, and they told me about Ranch Foods Direct. And Shawn Baker (an internet influencer) was there, and he was also promoting the company. So I checked out the store on Fillmore, and it was great. It's nice being able to see all the behind-the-scenes stuff and how hands-on everyone is.

FUTURE AMBITIONS: I would like to go into functional nutrition or be more on the local community nutrition side of things, and really just get involved in the whole food-is-medicine movement. I moved here ten years ago, and I've fallen in love with Colorado. After I graduate, I'd like to stay here and go into a program where I can learn more about nutrition and maybe get certified in it.

Warm rich comfort food for winter

BOLOGNESE TOMATO SAUCE WITH GROUND BEEF

- 1 yellow onion
- 1 celery stalk
- 1 carrot
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. fresh minced garlic
- 2 lbs. Callicrate ground beef
- 3 28-oz. cans diced tomatoes
- 2 28-oz. cans whole San Marzano tomatoes
- 2 ½ oz. tomato paste
- 12 oz. water
- 1 Tbsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1 pinch grated nutmeg
- 1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary
- 2 tsp. granulated garlic
- 1 ½ Tbsp. dry oregano
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup chiffonade of fresh basil

Puree onion, celery and carrot in a food processor until smooth. In a large stock pot, sauté the puréed vegetables and garlic in the olive oil. Add the ground beef and cook until meat is done. Use the back of a slotted spoon or potato masher to break up any chunks. In a 6-quart blender puree the tomatoes, salt, pepper, nutmeg, rosemary, granulated garlic and oregano. Add blended tomato mix to the pot with the veggies and beef. Reduce heat and simmer until reduced by about 2-3 inches (usually about 1 hour) stirring often. It's impossible to stir this dish too much. Keep it moving so the solids don't settle to the bottom and burn. When sauce is thoroughly cooked, remove from the heat and add sugar and fresh basil at the very end. Enjoy this sauce over pasta, use it as a base for lasagna (thickened with more ground beef) or in other baked pasta dishes.



*Recipe created by
Chef Eric Brenner
of Red Gravy*

*Visit the Side Dish
with Schniper recipe
archive on Substack*

HOLIDAY FOOD TRADITIONS ARE CHANGING.

Whole turkeys are becoming less dominant as a center-of-plate choice at holiday dinners, according to a report by Denver-based Co-Bank Knowledge Exchange. The report cites growing demand for convenience, long-term pressure on turkey supplies and increasing competition from beef and pork. Pastured turkeys like the ones from Gunthorp Farms of Indiana (shown below) remain very hard to find, according to Mike Callicrate, owner of Ranch Foods Direct. "We are one of the few places in the country where you can get a bird that isn't raised in a highly confined factory-type model. It's wrong that we have to go all the way to Indiana to get a well-raised turkey. But it's become a very consolidated market with a few big players and very few options for small growers to get processing." RFD is your source for responsibly raised meats direct from the farm or ranch.



GunthorpFarms.com

Gift of Grain
Sustenance Shared through
heritage food collaboration



Ranch Foods Direct vendor Pueblo Seed and Food Co (see their products at the bread display and in the dry goods section of the store) has joined a small but growing network of artisan bakeries in Colorado that use donations from existing customers to provide healthy whole-grain bread to at-risk members in their local communities. Owners Dan Hobbs and Nanna Meyer signed on as satellite members of Tomorrow's Bread, a nonprofit started by the Tumbleweed Bread bakery in the San Luis Valley that makes local bread available to rural food banks. Pueblo Seed and Food, now based at Cortez, makes and distributes farm-grown organic grain products, including grits, granola and cereals, as well as dried herbs and seasonings. Their beautifully packaged products make great gifts!

PUEBLO CHILE GARLIC MASHERS

- 5 medium-sized potatoes
- 5 roasted Pueblo chiles
- 3 or more cloves garlic
- 1 cup milk • 2 Tbsp butter

Chop cloves and roasted Pueblo chiles together and let stand for 10 minutes. Heat some olive oil or tallow in a skillet, turn on low and add garlic-chile mixture. Saute for a minute or two, taking care not to burn the garlic. Set aside and boil potatoes with skin on until soft. Drain potatoes and transfer to a mixing bowl. Add butter, milk and chile-garlic mixture and hand-mash to get desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



Stores will be OPEN Dec. 24 and Dec. 31
Closed on Christmas & New Year's Day



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Natural Meat Market

Two retail locations in Colorado Springs!

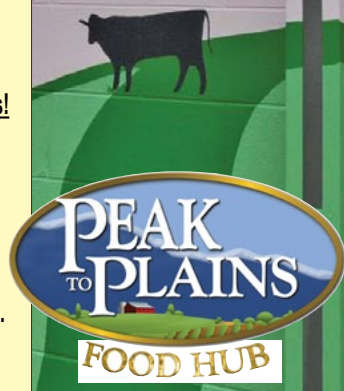
Flagship store: 1228 E. Fillmore
719-623-2980

Food hub: 4635 Town Center Drive
719-559-0873

Retail hours at both locations:
Monday through Saturday 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Or shop online. Shipping available.

www.ranchfoodsdirect.com



To get store updates
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