Food for Thought
People • Products • Purpose
December 2025

"The momentum is shifting. Hope is growing from the ground up."
Glenn Holloway

Supporting Resilience

A customer reflects on the future of food

Ranch Foods Direct customer Douglas Glenn Holloway lives near Peyton. He's a Marine and U.S. Army veteran, video producer, and holistic management training educator who has long supported regenerative agriculture. He's also the author of multiple books, including most recently Farming God's Way: Be the Stewards We Should Be, available on Amazon. Find more of his books and resources online at RadicalResilience.health.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN SHOPPING AT RANCH FOODS DIRECT AND WHAT TYPES OF PRODUCTS DO YOU TYPICALLY BUY?

I've been shopping at Ranch Food Direct since 2019. I also serve as a beef broker for a variety of individuals in the Colorado Springs area and tend to purchase Cowpools ranging from one-eighth of a cow up to a full animal. I do this as a service, because I believe in promoting quality beef that has not been injected with numerous hormones or vaccines. Additionally, Ranch Food Direct understands the importance of raising their cattle on quality feeds that do not contain harmful chemicals. We are what we eat.

HOW DID YOU END UP IN COLORADO SPRINGS?

I moved to Colorado Springs in 2019 after leaving my 1,200-acre farm in Idaho. Our family moved here after experiencing a black mold exposure and after seeing the increased use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides in the Palouse region where I lived result in numerous people getting sick from herbicide exposure. Colorado Springs is virtually devoid of the chemical use associated with farming and hence it was a place where we could heal and distance ourselves from those toxins.

WAS THERE A KEY EXPERIENCE THAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE PRIOR TO THAT?

At one point in my career — back in 2003 — I was the Local Infrastructure Chief for the Department of Defense. Food was one of the ten critical infrastructures I tracked. It became very obvious at that time the way food was raised was also critical to the health of our nation. Subsequently I took farming classes under Joel Salatin and Allan Savory, both of which stressed the importance of raising food in a regenerative manner.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR APPROACH TO HEALTHY COOKING AND EATING?

I eat almost totally organic and screen the ingredients in almost all foods I buy. I am currently working on defining nutrient-rich foods and their metrics. My favorite meal is a good steak and quality vegetables.

YOUR FAMILY'S FAVORITE HOLIDAY FOODS?

Turkey, sweet potatoes and a good salad.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEW YEAR, WHAT CONCERNS YOU MOST ABOUT THE CURRENT FOOD SYSTEM AND WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL INSPIRED AND HOPEFUL?

The most concerning issue to me is the accelerating consolidation of control — where a handful of corporations now dominate seeds, chemicals, processing, and distribution — creating a fragile, centralized system vulnerable to economic, ecological, and geo-political shocks. This concentration has driven farming toward dependency on synthetic inputs, genetically uniform crops, and long supply chains that are easily disrupted, while simultaneously eroding soil health, polluting waterways, and hollowing out rural communities. As soils degrade and biodiversity declines, yields become increasingly reliant on chemical crutches that offer diminishing returns, leaving farmers trapped in a cycle of rising costs and shrinking resilience. The result is a food system that looks efficient on the surface, but is structurally brittle underneath and could falter rapidly under stress.

At the same time, I see a powerful movement of renewal unfolding, driven by small farmers, local communities, and consumers demanding healthier, more resilient food. Farmers' markets, CSA programs, and farm-to-table networks are expanding at the fastest pace in decades. Proposed legislation could open long-overdue doors for small-scale meat processing, enabling local farms to sell directly to consumers and reducing dependence on the four corporate packers that dominate the industry. Regenerative agriculture is gaining national attention, and new cooperatives, local food hubs, small processors, and community-owned distribution models are emerging.

The future is not predetermined. Every season, more farmers are stepping off the industrial treadmill and into a system rooted in faith, freedom, and resilience.

First eggs, then turkeys, hit supply snags

Historic bird flu outbreak reveals cracks in the highly confined production model

AFTER A PRE-THANKSGIVING DELAY, turkey is in ample supply at Ranch Foods Direct, with various sizes of whole turkeys, cooked, smoked and sliced deli meat, and roasted turkey parts, including thighs, legs and breasts available throughout the holiday season.

The week prior to Thanksgiving, however, expected store deliveries from a Denver-based supplier came up short, due to a familiar culprit that also affected egg supplies this past year: bird flu.

In recent years, the disease has had a devastating impact. An estimated 160 million domestic birds either died or were euthanized to contain its spread.

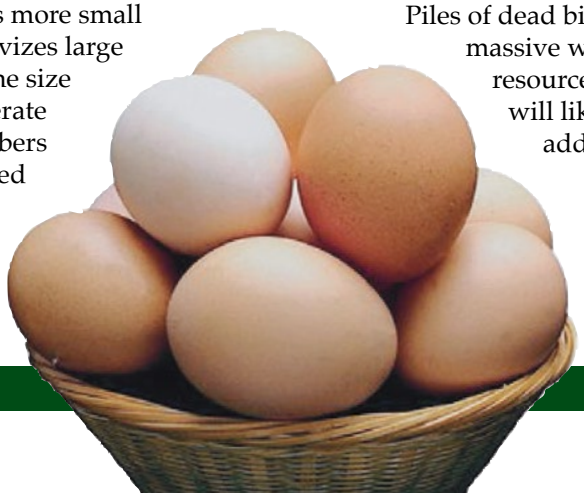
"The industrial confinement model of animal production is a magnet for these types of diseases," observes Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate. "It causes antibiotics to become less effective and pathogens to develop resistance. But we can't build the alternative food system fast enough, in part because it's hard to get recognition, funding and support."

Ranch Foods Direct customers might recall that during the first three months of 2025, eggs were in short supply. As soon as a delivery would arrive from Yoder Farms, an Amish farm in the San Luis Valley, the cartons would sell out in a day. Callicrate, who runs a multi-species livestock farm three hours northeast of the Springs, also produces eggs, but production is seasonal and tends to decline in the winter months. That's because egg production is influenced by light. In pastured birds, shorter days mean fewer eggs, according to poultry experts.

With a similar supply crunch nationwide, the big story line to emerge in the media was egg prices. Many consumers were aghast at the idea of paying up to a dollar for a single egg.

Expecting an egg, or a turkey, to cost the same or less than it did five years ago, when the cost of nearly everything else has gone up and stayed up, seems to defy logic. Labor, management, transportation, housing, construction, repair, and insurance all get bid into the price of the product. Can the producer be expected to absorb all these added costs?

LOW PROFITABILITY forces more small farms out of business and incentivizes large farms to get even bigger. While the size and scale at which producers operate continues to grow, livestock numbers decline. As Callicrate has explained in multiple interviews, the U.S. cowherd is now at its lowest level in more than 75 years, alongside fewer farms.



High costs and lack of profitability keep new producers from entering the business. Over time, those long-term trends force prices to rise, since there are fewer animals — and farms — to meet demand.

Corporate consolidation is another complex but critical factor in food availability and price. In early 2025, the nonprofit group Farm Action published a comprehensive report that drew back the curtain on Cal-Maine Foods, a publicly traded company that now produces 20 percent of the nation's entire egg supply. It revealed that Cal-Maine increased its gross profits by 237 percent between 2021 and 2024. The report contends that during the egg crisis Cal-Maine and other dominant egg producers were able to use higher prices to capture record profits, while increasing their market share.

The report also highlighted some of the barriers to entry in the egg market. Just two private European corporations control the breeding of an estimated 90 percent of the world's egg-laying hens, while Cal-Maine maintains its own breeder flock. "This impedes the ability of new competitors to enter the market and increase supply to help stabilize prices," the report said.

More recently, the Open Markets Institute pegged a 75 percent increase in turkey prices to declines in the national flock, which is now at a 40-year low. As the industry shrinks, the farms that remain become larger and more concentrated, with some raising as many as 300,000 birds in one location.

"Diseases like bird flu are one of the ongoing threats we face by concentrating too many animals in one spot," Callicrate said.

THE FIRST BIG WAVE of bird flu hit the poultry industry in 2015. The highly infectious disease became harder to control once it entered the wildlife population. Birds aren't the only animals affected by its global circulation. The past year brought massive die-offs of dolphins, seals, and even polar bears. It also spread to the dairy industry, with sick cows leading to steep drops in commercial milk production. Scientists are concerned it could eventually get into the hog population too, which would pose a human health risk.

Piles of dead birds at large poultry barns represent a massive waste of human labor, time and natural resources. Callicrate says the disease cycle will likely continue unless the U.S. acts to address how livestock are raised.

"We allow the government to bail out the companies when they're impacted, instead of forcing them to change their production practices to reduce the spread of disease."

Featured Recipe

Pork Green Chili

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RANCH FOODS DIRECT
Good Food ... that's good for you!

Recipe created by Chef Will Merwin
in collaboration with Ranch Foods Direct
and Side Dish With Schniper

PORK GREEN CHILI

3/4 cup rendered pork fat
3 lbs. diced pork shoulder (from a 4-pound bone-in shoulder; save the bone)
2 Tbsp salt
1/2 Tbsp black pepper
3 yellow onions, diced
1 cup minced garlic
1 tsp cumin
2 Tbsp dried oregano
4 quarts canned tomato
8-10 cups roasted green chiles
1 quart chicken stock
1 quart water
7 small corn tortillas
1/2 bunch of cilantro
2 cups water
Salt to taste

Put the pork shoulder in the oven at 350 F and roast until browned, about 45 minutes. Remove the bone and save for later. Place the lard in a large heavy bottom soup pot over high heat. Toss the diced pork with the salt and pepper. Heat the lard until it just begins to smoke and add in the seasoned pork. Sear the pork on all sides until a brown crust forms and the bottom of the pan starts to color. Add in the diced onion and cook until soft. Add the minced garlic and sweat it, but be sure not to burn. Add in the cumin and oregano and sweat the aromatic. Next add in the tomato, green chiles, stock or broth, water and pork shoulder bone. Bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low and continue to simmer for 1-2 hours until the pork is tender, stirring often. After the pork is tender, combine the corn tortillas, cilantro and remaining 2 cups of water in a blender and puree until smooth. Add the tortilla purée to the simmering chili and cook for 10-20 more minutes, until thickened. Add salt to taste. Garnish with pickled peppers, Springside Cheese grated Pueblo Jack and strips of crispy tortilla.

PICKLED PEPPERS FOR GARNISH

1/2 cup sugar
2 cups neutral-flavored vinegar
2 cups water
1 Tbsp salt
6 sliced peppers

Place all ingredients in non-reactive pot over medium heat, bring to a simmer, remove from heat and cover. Allow covered peppers to sit for at least 30 minutes before serving.

Even in a house divided...

Tasty traditions come together beautifully!

DID YOU KNOW? ... Ranch Foods Direct gave away more than 1,000 lbs of ground beef to SNAP beneficiaries during the recent record-long government shutdown

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PEAK TO PLAINS FOOD HUB

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