

# Food for Thought

People • Products • Purpose

February 2022

“Without love of the land, conservation lacks meaning or purpose, for only in a deep and inherent feeling for the land can there be dedication in preserving it.”

— Nature writer Sigurd F. Olson

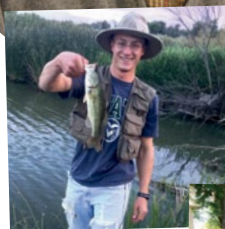
“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” — Aldo Leopold

## Fountain Valley Tradition

*Frost farm raises food to feed the Southern Colorado community*

Among the dozens of livestock producers who reached out to Callicrate Cattle Company and Ranch Foods Direct for custom processing over the past year was Frost Livestock Co of Fountain. This storied multi-generational farm along Fountain Creek direct-markets lamb and produce to grateful customers in the surrounding community, but can only do it if they have a way to get their animals processed. "It definitely helped us out a whole lot," says owner Jay Frost. "To get something slaughtered with a USDA stamp of inspection, it's not as easy as it used to be."

Diversification and creativity have been essential for allowing Jay and his sons Sam and Will to continue the family's farming tradition that goes back to 1958. In addition to operating a CSA at the farm during the growing season, they host farm-to-table dinners organized by A Grazing Life, rent out the ranch as a wedding venue and offer hunting and recreation tours. These activities are in addition to the traditional work of running cattle and sheep, and irrigating and putting up hay.



Jay credits the younger generation with bringing energy and ideas to the ranch.

"Fortunately I've got kids who are interested in agriculture, so I'm blessed in that sense," he says. "We're just trying to go the way of small, independent and self-reliant. We don't aspire to the big feedlot mentality. We want to be grassfed, local and part of our community."

Some aspects of their business were dampened by the pandemic. Many couples put weddings on hold, for example, waiting out the health risk. And after shelves at the big chain grocery stores emptied, demand for local meat sources surged, but getting livestock processed grew more difficult, due to a lack of small scale butcher plants and labor shortages.

Jay credits Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate with having the long-term vision to recognize the need to control a pathway to the market, which keeps marketing channels open for other ranchers as well. But after surmounting the hurdle of getting their lambs processed, the Frost farm might now be facing its biggest threat yet. For more on that, see page two.



## Ranch at risk? Frosts face development pressure

After leasing grazing land from the Colorado State Land Board for 60 years, the Frost family has now been placed on notice they will likely lose a key part of their lease to make way for a solar farm. The solar developer - the world's largest utility company of its kind - can pay hundreds of dollars per acre more for a lease than a rancher could ever dream of paying. The Land Board owns and manages 2.8 million acres with the revenue used to help fund Colorado's public schools. Ninety-eight percent of the land is leased for agriculture, and the Frost family has enjoyed a great relationship with the Land Board for many decades. But now the solar developer has "cherry picked" a prime parcel that was carefully developed and improved by the Frosts to serve as a water storage site. It sits at a high point on the ranch so water can be gravity-fed to numerous stock tanks on the property as well as two neighboring ranches. While only a small fraction of the total land, it's vital to how the ranch functions. In a meeting with the Land Board, Sam Frost estimated it would cost his family \$50,000 in annual revenue due to lost grazing and recreational and hunting activities. Jay isn't opposed to solar energy, but some of its "luster" has worn off for him after fickle overtures by four different companies in the last ten years. He also worries developmental pressures will continue to tear apart tightly knit ranching communities like nearby Hanover, and undermine the natural environment and the ability for consumers to get locally grown food from people they know. "Keep whittling it down, and there's no land to grow anything anymore," he says.



*As is true of meat, spices are best when sourced as directly as possible from those who assemble their inventory with thoughtfulness and care. Savory Spice Shop downtown is locally owned and operated, part of a larger franchise born and still based in Denver. Michael Kimball serves as national test kitchen manager, a role that involves helping to demystify the art of seasoning. "I think once people try a specialty artisanal spice shop, they have trouble going back to weaker, more generic grocery store spices."*

**ARE YOU A COLORADO NATIVE? HOW DID YOU END UP WORKING IN FOOD?** I'm from Seattle originally and studied nutrition in college before attending Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts in Boulder. My mom is a food chemist and that's where I developed my interest in baking and cooking. I've lived in Colorado for four years now, and I love it here.

**YOUR JOB SOUNDS REALLY INTERESTING.** It's a lot of recipe development but also product development. This year we're releasing several new Spice 'n Easy recipe mixes, basically an all-you-need spice pack for a meal. For example, for chicken enchilada chili, just dump all the spices in and add a few fresh ingredients and you're done. I develop those, which is really fun, and we also have recipe testers who help us. We're always looking for recipe testers, if anybody is interested. In addition, we do all of our food photography here at our Denver kitchen.

## WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE ON SELECTING SPICES

**TO ENHANCE BEEF OR PORK?** Beef has a higher proportion saturated fat and a bold flavor on its own when cooked, so it's often paired with more robust, bold, enduring spices that hold up to longer cooking times and bolder flavors. Those spices are typically aromatic and allium-forward, such as rosemary, oregano and thyme. Many spices are fat-soluble, so you can pair them with beef and get a fullness of flavor from the flavor dispersing in the fat. Our Sunday pot roast mix has a lot of robust, peppery, aromatic, garlic-and-onion flavors. Pork is really flexible, with both lean and fatty cuts. The flavors for that tend to skew sweeter and smokier and a little more delicate. Since pork has a higher proportion of fatty acids, it's less rich and it goes well with more delicate, water-soluble flavors, including acids like tamarind, which is very fruity and a little sweet; and sumac, a trendy spice right now with a beautiful garlic color.

## WHAT OTHER SPICES ARE ESPECIALLY APPEALING TO USE THIS TIME OF YEAR?

February is saffron month at Savory Spice. We have a saffron salt that is available only in February and comes in a beautiful Valentine tin. It's simultaneously bold and delicate, and it goes well with both beef and pork. It makes a great finishing salt for any dish.



**ONE OF MY FAVORITE SUGGESTIONS YOU MADE IN RECENT MONTHS WAS TO DO THANKSGIVING DINNER AS A BIG CHARCUTERIE BOARD. THAT SEEMS LIKE A FUN WAY TO TURN ANY SPECIAL OCCASION INTO A LIGHTER, MORE RELAXED CELEBRATION.** Charcuterie boards have been popular for some time now, but I think they are evolving and becoming more versatile. You are starting to see more emphasis on flavor over aesthetics, with the focus on local, high quality items. With supply chain issues, prices are going up for imported food, so more people are looking at elevating the flavors of local foods to create unique options for their board. I personally think it would be a great idea to do a Valentine's board.

## ANY OTHER NEW DISCOVERIES IN TERMS OF FLAVORS OR PREPARATION METHODS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

We've recently been doing dishes from around the world, and we're currently working on Egypt and India, where they use high-heat tandoori clay ovens for cooking. Instead, we are using the broiler in our oven to get that same charring effect. Broiling allows you to get those deep flavors from the browning action. Pyrazines are flavor compounds that develop when you toast spices or sear a steak. For that kind of cooking, you want to use spices with larger granules — minced garlic as opposed to garlic powder, for example — and avoid high sugar content, because it will burn more easily.



Craving something spicy? The subtle tangy heat of horseradish cheddar spread pairs so well with so many things. This seasonal favorite made in-house by Chef Monika works as a dip or — Monika's favorite — as a topping on burgers or sliders. It's also great on roast beef sandwiches, a baked potato or a bowl of chili. Or stir it into mashed potatoes or stovetop mac and cheese. The options are endless. Another great addition to any Super Bowl party is the caramelized onion and bacon spinach dip. Both in store now.

**TUESDAY SPECIAL:** Buy four-get-one-free on one-pound packages of 80/20 ground beef. The perfect lean-to-fat ratio for rich juicy texture and flavor!



The store has all you need to make a masterful charcuterie board, including Callicrate summer sausage and salami, plus multiple flavors of Springside Cheese, Colorado-made pickles, jams, honey, select produce, sweet treats and more!





Home of  
the famous  
"Sweetheart Steak"

### D-I-Y MEXICAN CHOCOLATE TRUFFLES

- 1 pound dark chocolate
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp chipotle chili powder
- 3/4 tsp sea salt
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- 1 tsp. pure Mexican vanilla
- 1/2 cup Mexican cocoa

In a small saucepan, bring 1-inch water to a simmer. In a large bowl, add chocolate, heavy cream, chipotle chile powder, and salt. Place bowl over simmering water so that it rests on the saucepan but does not touch the water. Stir to gently melt chocolate and combine ingredients. When melted, remove from heat and stir in butter and vanilla. Chill until firm, about 2 hours. Scoop and shape into 1-inch balls; roll in cocoa powder.

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