

Food for Thought

People • Products • Purpose

January 2022

“Everyone who slept in a bed last night and had breakfast this morning has something to be grateful for... Be humble. Be grateful. It's good for you. It's good for the world.” — Sheldon Solomon, award winning psychology professor and co-author of *The Worm at the Core: On the Role of Death in Life*

Cozy winter night out

Coffee shop offers a classic steak dinner in an intimate setting

Eric Umenhofer is known for roasting great coffee, but it turns out he's adept at grilling, baking and braising too. One day a week the former firefighter and long-time owner of Colorado Coffee Merchants, Ranch Foods Direct's neighbor along the Fillmore business corridor, pulls out all the stops on his diverse range of kitchen skills to offer a unique and much-needed dining option in the area. Friday night steak night at the coffeehouse combines an intimate, informal setting with the best steak in town, all at a very affordable price.

HOW DID THE IDEA COME

ABOUT? DO YOU LIKE TO COOK? I cooked for years at the firehouse. I actually started cooking when I was 8 years old in my parents' kitchen, charging them whatever seemed appropriate. (Laughs.) So I do love cooking. And there's just nowhere to go in town and have a good steak. I wanted to give people the chance to have a great meal and not have to spend \$100. We're doing a seven or eight-ounce Callicrate filet with

caramelized carrots and a loaded baked

potato for \$35, so you really do get your money's worth. Right now we are serving in the lounge area, but I'd also like to expand it to include bread and dessert and do reserved seating on the dining side as well.

DO YOU THINK THE PANDEMIC HAS MADE PEOPLE MORE AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR FOOD AND WHERE IT COMES FROM?

I think so. I hope so. We talk about it all the time around here. We grind our own wheat from the Sun Luis Valley to make our flour, we make our own butter, and we cure our own bacon and ham from pork shoulder and pork belly we get from Ranch Foods Direct. So everything is house made. This past year we've been buying all kinds of things — fruit, honey and produce items — from Jenn (Panariso, owner of One Eleven Neighborhood Farm) and we'll be securing as much from her as we can in the new year as well. Having these types of small business relationships is good for all of us.

The next Friday steak night is coming up January 7. Walk-ins welcome. 719-473-8878 • 302 E. Fillmore





Amber Waves

The heritage grain movement is making waves in Colorado. One way to celebrate this enticing new trend is with decorative grain and juniper bundles made by Nanna Meyer, co-owner of Hobbs and Meyer Farms of Pueblo. The bundles serve as ideal table centerpieces, winter décor, or gift toppers that capture the uniquely whimsical beauty of our peak-to-plains region. In store now.



NANNA, WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START MAKING THE GRAIN BUNDLES? While our farm focuses on grains for food, there are so many other uses — the stalks can even be used as a drinking straw! Ever since I started working with heritage grains, and having grown up with a Scandinavian mom in Switzerland, I learned about the beauty of grain used in decorations. For example, grain straw can be used for braiding (like our Pueblo Hearts inspired by Swedish holiday decorations.) The bundles were my way of extending the beauty of our grain season in July into the fall and winter months. Many years of conducting grain trials also helped me to learn about the varieties and which are best suited for bundles, when to harvest, how best to store, bundle, and cut, and how to display and decorate. For me working with my hands balances working with my brain, and I thoroughly enjoy the hand-harvesting and then the craft-making that follows.

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND THE GRAIN YOU USED? These particular bundles are made with a heritage wheat brought from the Old World. It is a winter wheat, purple in color, and not too tall, which grows very straight without any lodging. In July, this wheat turns from light green to golden with a silky salmon sheen and some mustard-colored nuances. The heads are broad and strong, reminding me of the “staff of life” and grain's true sustenance for people over millennia. We have grown this variety organically for several years, bulking up the seeds, but have yet to taste it in food! We started with a handful and will soon release it in our first grain products.

HOW LONG DO THE BUNDLES LAST? IS ANY SPECIAL CARE REQUIRED? Grain bundles and straw decorations last for years to come! The evergreens will dry down and get brittle. Customers who like to keep the bundles can remove the evergreen and keep the bundle as decor. I set them out, in vases, on tables or hung upside down on the wall, all year round. As you can imagine, I have bundles all over our house!

AS FOUNDER OF UCCS GRAIN SCHOOL, CAN YOU SPEAK TO ANY OTHER EXCITING NEW PRODUCTS ON THE HORIZON? One exciting development is the building of a local tortilleria in Boone, Colorado, at the Excelsior Food Hub. Together with Rocky Mountain Farmers Union and a team of experts from Mexico and funded by Colorado Gates Family Foundation, a local workforce will launch artisan-made tortillas with Colorado-grown corn. Southern Coloradans will have access to real tortillas with only three ingredients: corn, cal lime, and water. Restaurants and retailers can also purchase fresh masa. The group at Excelsior Farmers Exchange will also focus on sourdough flour tortillas.



CATCH THE WAVE... UCCS Grain School online builds knowledge and hands-on practical skills for university students and community participants. It consists of three separate sessions: farming and processing is the theme in February; health and nutrition in March; and community building in April. A free online public forum is planned for March 5. Enroll at Outreach.uccs.edu/grain.

At home on the range



Drew Kaup is general manager of Callicrate Cattle Company, head of the on-farm slaughter crew, farm mechanic and resident jack-of-all-trades. He grew up in farming and ranching, but he also worked in a sugarbeet factory, served in the Marine Corps, coached college wrestling and ran his own construction company for 15 years. He sums it up this way: “Life’s an adventure — just grab ahold and go.”

STEAK FINGERS RECIPE

Cut 1 pound of Callicrate round steak into 3-inch strips. Whisk 2 eggs and 1/2 cup milk in a shallow dish with salt and pepper. Place a large skillet over medium heat and pour in enough sunflower oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Dredge steak pieces in flour and shake off the excess. Then dip in the egg mixture and coat again in flour. Fry the strips in the oil until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Drain on paper towel and serve.

WHAT DO YOU WISH CONSUMERS KNEW ABOUT FARMING AND RANCHING? It needs help. It’s not the same as it was when I grew up, and I’m only in my mid-40s. I wish people were more educated on the plight of the small farmer, what it takes, the stress of it, but also the devotion. You have to have devotion or you’ll never make it.

AGRICULTURE IS SUCH HARD WORK WITH SO MANY CHALLENGES. WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING? Just the love of being outside. There’s a love, almost an emotional or spiritual connection, to watching animals be born and then be slaughtered, to seeing the whole process. Planting a seed, watching it grow and harvesting it. The smell of a fresh-cut hay field. Unless you’ve experienced it, it’s hard to explain what it does to you or how it makes you feel.

WHAT GOALS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE RANCH MAKE YOU EXCITED ABOUT THE YEAR AHEAD? Getting people back in contact with where their food comes from. Just knowing people like Mike are out there with a strong voice, making people understand what we do is hard and that we are being taken advantage of all the time, by people who don’t know what it takes to actually feed other people. I think that’s being left out of the whole financial equation. There’s so much that people like Mike are helping to bring to light. If there is going to be any restoration of how things were and how they could be again, we have to get people out of the asphalt jungle and let them put their hands in the dirt. There’s something about the circle of life that feeds the soul.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE CUTS OF BEEF AND PORK AND HOW DO YOU LIKE THEM PREPARED? With beef, I don’t have one favorite cut, I like it all. Although the Callicrate prime rib I made at Thanksgiving was in the top two or three best meals I’ve ever had for sure! Pork-wise I would have to say a good loin roast or barbecue ribs, and you can’t not like bacon. But when it comes to meat, I like it all.

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Callibrate fights Big Farm with local agriculture.

*Peak to Plains Food Hub lauded as a shop-local voice on the Springs' southeast side.
Online: SoutheastExpress.org*



D-I-Y STEAK SEASONING

- 1/3 cup finely ground coffee
- 1/2 cup chili powder
- 1/3 cup smoked paprika
- 1/2 cup sea salt
- 2/3 cup dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper

Mix everything together and store in an airtight container for up to three months. Local Umpire Estates coffee recommended!

Shop online @ RanchFoodsDirect.com and pick up curbside @ 4635 Town Center Dr

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