

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

July 2024

“To change something, build a new model.”

— Buckminster Fuller

Supporting USA beef



Small custom processors needed to help connect ranchers with consumers

Montana Canterbury (third from left) comes from an esteemed Colorado ranching family and now runs Westcliffe Meats in Westcliffe. He likes to bring his plant crew to tour Ranch Foods Direct and meet owner Mike Callicrate, shown in photo at far left.



MONTANA, CAN YOU SHARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF RANCH FOODS DIRECT?

Mike's always been a great ally. I can always call and ask him any questions I have. We like to come up and watch them do the cutting process. It's nice to see how somebody else does things. Even if we do things a little bit differently, we all end up with the same cuts. Luis, in particular, is an awesome guy, but he's also a really spectacular meat cutter. That kind of gets lost with everything else he does. And I've always been really impressed by the retail store. It's very nice. We do some of that too, but our main focus is on custom processing for the rancher.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE FUTURE OF RANCHING, WHAT DO YOU SEE? I think we'll see a huge diversion between the small rancher and the corporate outfits. In fact, I think we're seeing it already. There's a lot of big-box beef out there. But there's also a lot of small producers who need processors like us to take advantage of the gap between the consumer and the rancher. Our average customer does maybe five head a year with us. They are thinking long-term and working on building up a business. Our goal is to provide a real high-end product and offer great customer service to help support that.

Local food writer Matthew Schniper continues his monthly recipe collaboration with Ranch Foods Direct by inviting up-and-coming chef Dustin Archuleta of District Elleven to put a new spin on how to elevate a Callicrate pork chop. The new recipe drops July 1. To see it and follow developments on the local food scene, go to Side Dish with Schniper on the Substack newsletter platform.



Coffee shop/bar strives for simple, elegant, timeless

In April, Colorado Coffee Merchants quietly celebrated 20 years in business. As the place evolves, it has expanded beyond a local coffee shop and roastery. Owner Eric Umerhofer offers happy hour on Wednesday, Callicrate Steak night on Friday, and breakfast crepes on Saturday. "We're always trying to change it up and have fun with it. I think that's important," he says.

ERIC, HOW DID IT FEEL TO CELEBRATE 20 YEARS IN BUSINESS? I had no idea what this was going to do when I opened the doors. No idea. But here we are. I don't think I'd be in the position I'm in now if it wasn't for Mike Callicrate, because of the quality of the food, the education he gave me about what he does and how that translates to everything we do now. We're very conscious of where we buy vegetables and meat. We mill our own flour and also get pastry flour from Gosar Milling. Other suppliers include Venice Olive Oil, Savory Spice, and Springside Cheese. It's like a small community. It's vital that we work with each other and buy from each other. It keeps us all going. But I probably wouldn't know a lot of these other vendors if I hadn't met Mike when I started this place.

TELL US ABOUT THE BREAKFAST CREPES. I love crepes. Whether savory or sweet, they have that element of creaminess, like the cream soups the French do so well. I think crepes are so universal and hard to resist. It's what I call simple elegance. Something that's a little better than pancakes, but still has that comfort-food feel. For the savory version, we get pork from Ranch Foods Direct and cure our own ham and bacon in-house. It's important to start with the right ingredients.

WHAT DO YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT SMALL BUSINESS? What I wish people understood is the quality of the food is so much different. I think we need to get back to our roots. Mike is great about talking about that. Here at the shop we make everything from scratch. There's not a mix or a can of anything in this place. When you look at our bread, there's three ingredients, not 40 different preservatives. It's terrible to think about what that does to your body. It's a factory-made product. I like the simplicity of what we offer. Our food waste is zero. So I'm happy with how everything's going, except for the economy. Everyone's holding pretty tight to their wallets, and have been, really, for the last couple of years.



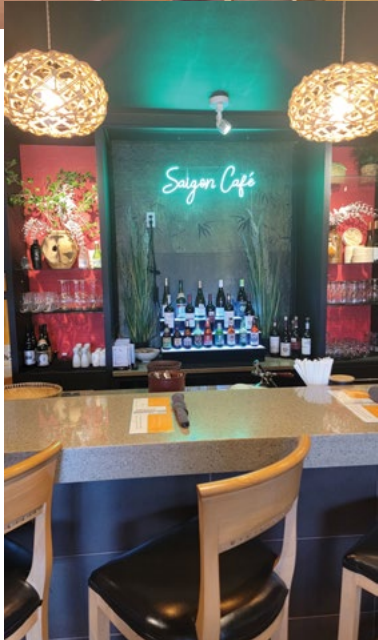
Above, from left, Sarah, Eric, Grace, Val and Stephanie share a collaborative working environment at RFD neighbor Colorado Coffee Merchants (located at 302 E. Fillmore.) Below, Val makes fresh sweet or savory breakfast crepes every Saturday morning from 9 to noon.



Bringing a fresh vibe to a downtown classic



Since Tim Hines and his wife Monse took over the Saigon Cafe, they've introduced their own wheat-free sauces, eliminated all food warmers, and doubled down on a commitment to local sourcing. The long-time Ranch Foods Direct customer restaurant will continue its steadfast tradition of serving Callicrate beef and pork. "It's been a wild ride," Tim admits of their decision to take over a Vietnamese staple operated in the same downtown building by the same owner for nearly 30 years. "Change is hard," he says. One thing is obvious. Tim and Monse always bring meticulous attention to detail to every new venture they take on. Monse, a native of El Salvador, serves as the couple's culinary muse. For 19 years, she followed Tim's military career around the world, putting her own interests on the backburner. When they settled in Colorado Springs, it was time to bring food to the fore. Early on, Ranch Foods Direct carried Monse's pupusas (empanada-like stuffed dumplings.) Eventually the couple opened their own pupuseria in Old Colorado City, to immediate and sustained success.



Three flavorful options from Saigon Cafe include, top to bottom at left, the grilled beef bun bowl, the short-rib bibimbap (featuring flanken ribs) and the steamed soup dumplings, stuffed with Callicrate pork, in a chile-infused broth.



As Tim concludes, "We love the Ranch Foods Direct message of keeping it local, and we do, right down to the garnish on the plate."



This colorful mural graces the adobe walls at Monse's pupuseria, where diners can enjoy a bamboo-enclosed patio, open daily, at 115 S. 25th in Old Colorado City.





Growing local

Customer Profile



Life changing. That's how Barak Ben-Amots describes the beef bacon at Ranch Foods Direct. He and Ruthie Marwardt, who are Jewish, manage the Flying Pig Farm in Manitou Springs. The two-acre community garden serves as a "living classroom" hosting summer camps and educational activities. Around 1,500 students came through the farm last year alone. "We teach them everything from harvesting to cooking," Barak said. Last month the couple gathered with other conservationists at the Ivywild School for a screening of Palmer Land Conservancy's new documentary film Mirasol, which follows the lives of traditional farm families on Pueblo's mesa. "We've been diving into local agriculture for at least ten years, and the Pueblo chiles were really an entry point for us," Barak observed. "We're fortunate to have so many great farms in the region and hope they'll be here for generations to come."

Happy Independence Day from Ranch Foods Direct!

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.
 Shop online. Shipping available.
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