



“If I was told I could only eat one food for the rest of my life, I could put up with sausage and mash forever.”

— English actor Colin Baker

When beer meets brat

When Ranch Foods Direct head butcher Billy Cox revisited a project he started working on last October in the run-up to Colorado Springs Sausage Fest — a beer brat made from Goat Patch Brewing’s World Beer Cup champion Scottish red ale — he knew he was on to something. Customers seem to agree. “They are a hit,” he says. “Everybody seems to like it.”

To create this new classic, he first experimented with a range of different brews. Mostly he was looking for a bold robust flavor pronounced enough to make the beer flavor distinguishable. Many beers just don’t pack enough punch. “I like having a beer brat where you can really taste the beer,” he says. “This one had all the key elements you’d want.”

The resulting brat pays tribute to the close ties between the two companies. The Goat Patch taproom is located just down the street from the Fillmore store at the Lincoln Center, 2727 N. Cascade, and utilizes cold storage and distribution space provided by Ranch Foods Direct at the Peak to Plains Food Hub on Town Center Drive.

More recently, Billy teamed up with Pikes Peak Brewing to develop a beer brat celebrating the brewery’s 12-year anniversary. Summit House Oatmeal Stout and Ascent Pale Ale both turned out to be excellent candidates. The oatmeal stout version is now available in store and at the Pikes Peak taproom in Monument. Stay tuned for future collaborations.

ON TAP NEXT: Ranch Foods Direct’s highly skilled butchers have a chance to express their creativity by developing fun new products. One of the most unusual inventions currently on the drawing board is “dog beer.” When enjoying a craft brew why should Fido be left out? Dog beer is made mostly from beef broth but can also include nonalcoholic malt or leftover hops from the craft brewing process. “It’s just a special treat to pour into a bowl or over their kibble,” Billy explains. “This aspect of what we do I really enjoy, when we get to try things out and sample out to customers. I feel like we’ve got something truly special going on here.”



Living vibrantly

Vendor/
Customer
Profile



FAVORITE RFD ITEMS? “I’ve purchased a lot of different things but I would have to say my favorites are the Wagyu beef rib-eyes and New York Strip steaks and the chorizo sausage. I’ve started using it in slow cooker meals and it’s absolutely phenomenal.”

WHAT SHE MOST LOOKS FORWARD TO MAKING THIS SUMMER: “There’s a recipe in *Weber’s Way to Grill* for a porterhouse steak with a slab of compound butter on top of it, made with sauteed shallots and Shiraz red wine reduced down along with fresh parsley and tarragon. I leave the tarragon out and put in thyme instead. It is life-changing! And there are lots of gorgeous ideas out there on social media for how to present the compound butter adorned with pretty edible flowers on the side.”

Is Amanda Scheck crafty? More like “manic creative.” That term was conjured up by one of her fellow artisans — 70 in all — who sell handmade items at the Eclectic, a cooperatively run boutique with locations downtown and in Old Colorado City. It certainly seems like an apt description. “Ever since I was a kid, I have been compelled to make things, to build, grow, clean up, and make things more beautiful,” she says. “I dye, I knit, I do a little woodworking. There really isn’t a craft I haven’t at least dabbled in. My therapy is making things and doing what I can to beautify the world around me.”

Amanda created a business based on her handicrafts and named it The Vibrant Owl in a nod to her quest for vibrant colors coupled with reverence for the wisdom and insight owls traditionally represent. Ranch Foods Direct is a great fit for displaying and selling her reusable cloth bags because the store is a showcase for local artisans of all kinds. “Especially after Covid and all the social distancing, there’s something so much more satisfying about buying things to use in your home that are made by actual people,” she points out. “Machine-made is just not the same as when you know someone made it with their own hands. And Ranch Foods Direct is great at facilitating that.”

In addition to reusable bags, she makes other earth-friendly kitchen products such as beeswax wraps and compostable dish cloths that she knits from cotton fabric. Since the material is natural fibers that eventually decompose, they can be tossed into the compost bin. She also makes what she calls paperless towels. “I take old t-shirts from goodwill, cut them into 5-by-7 pieces, hem the edges and dye them. They are pretty, but their real value is they can be washed and reused. My family has cut our paper towel use to a quarter of what it was by using these.”

Another cool item? Linen bread bags, which were common in the old days before plastic. “Something about the linen keeps light out and moisture in, so bread doesn’t go stale,” she explains.

Amanda’s long been a Ranch Foods customer, not only because she supports the mission, but because she considers the meat superior. “The quality of the meat is really, really high. I’m from Wisconsin originally and I know beef. Ranch Foods Direct has the best beef I’ve had anywhere in the world. We’re a military family, and we’ve lived overseas, including in Germany for three years. I don’t even remember how I found Ranch Foods Direct, but once I saw that good quality marbling, we were excited to try it, and we’ve been hooked on it ever since.”

Her appreciation for food stems from growing up in the country with a huge garden. “We grew a ton of our own vegetables to can and freeze,” she recalls. Now she carries on the same tradition on her family’s half-acre property in Colorado Springs. “It’s been challenging to say the least,” she acknowledges of the local climate, but adds, “Grow where you’re planted.” Flower farming is one of her many interests; her bouquets grace several venues around town. And she’s raising three kids. Despite all this activity, cooking with thoughtfulness and care is a priority. “Nothing makes you feel more loved than a home-cooked meal,” she says. “I try to incorporate that into every day.”

Meet the Makers

The Peak to Plains Food Hub is launching a monthly open house event where customers can learn more about the wide selection of unique products and vendors.

WHAT: Come by and meet featured vendors, learn about who they are and what they do, sample new food items and take advantage of special one-day sales.

WHEN: Second Saturday of every month starting **June 10**

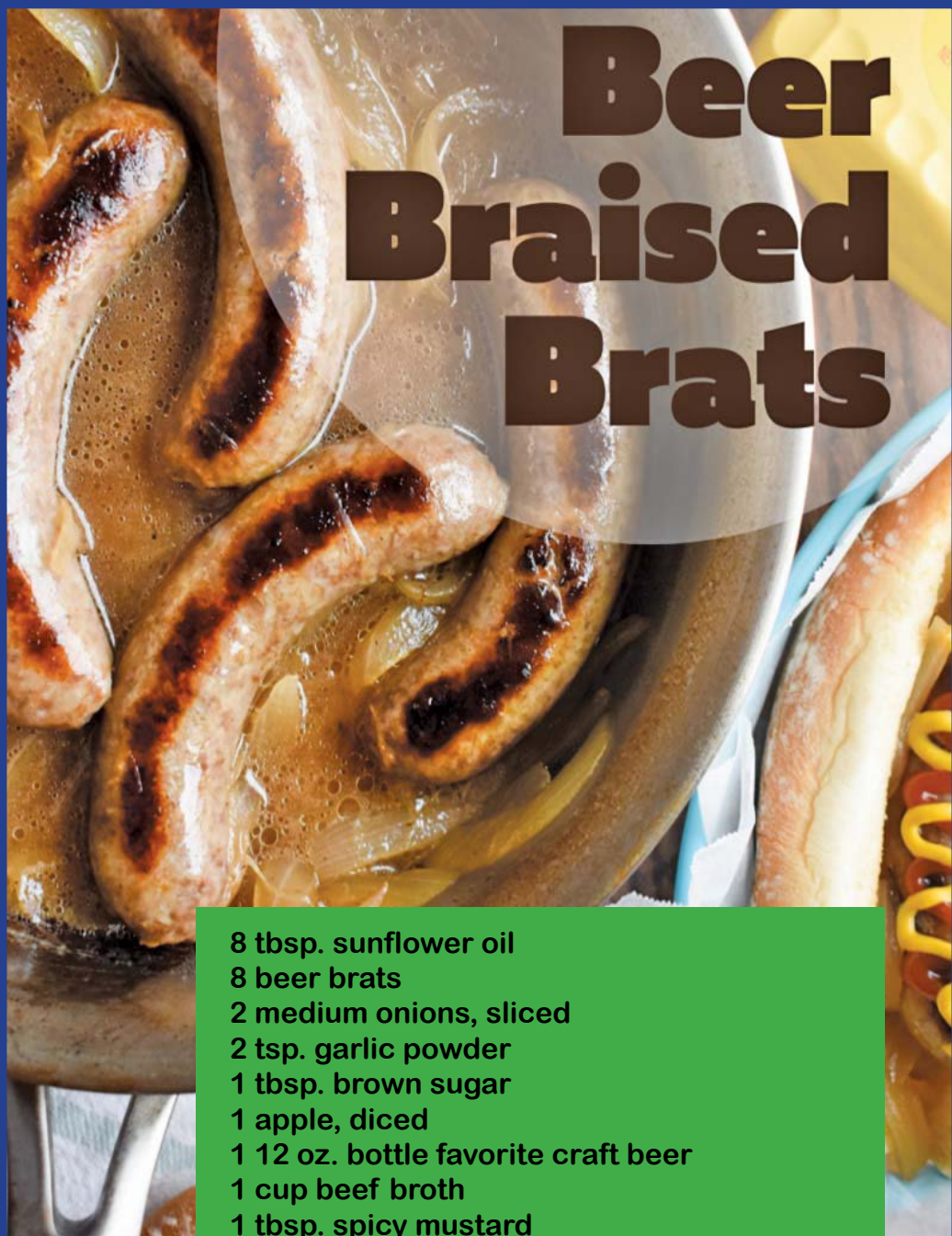
WHERE: Peak to Plains Food Hub at 4635 Town Center Dr
Enjoy the nearby trails and outdoor seating



“For too long the people who grow and make things haven’t received their fair share in our economy. We think they deserve more, and the key to their success — and ours — is giving them direct market access to the public. When we create that connection, we all benefit.”

—Ranch Foods Direct owner
Mike Callicrate

Beer Braised Brats



8 tbsp. sunflower oil
8 beer brats
2 medium onions, sliced
2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tbsp. brown sugar
1 apple, diced
1 12 oz. bottle favorite craft beer
1 cup beef broth
1 tbsp. spicy mustard
2 sprigs fresh thyme

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add brats and cook until browned, about 4 minutes per side. Remove from skillet. Add onions, garlic powder, brown sugar and apples to pan and sauté until softened and caramelized, 12-15 minutes. Whisk in beer, broth and mustard, then return brats to skillet with thyme. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until brats are cooked through and liquid has reduced, about 15 minutes. Serve atop potatoes, sauerkraut or roasted vegetables.

HOW TO MAKE STEAKS TOPPED WITH COMPOUND BUTTER

- 4 steaks
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp pepper
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 stick butter (½ cup)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tbsp parsley, chopped
- 2 tbsp thyme, chopped
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper

Remove the steaks from the fridge and rub with salt, pepper, and garlic. Allow to sit for 30 minutes. To make the butter, heat the butter in the microwave for 20-30 seconds or until just softened. Add garlic, parsley, thyme, salt, and pepper and mix well. Place the butter mixture in waxed paper and roll into a log. Refrigerate 20-30 minutes. Heat a gas grill to medium high heat. Put the steaks on and cook 5-7 minutes per side or until desired temperature is reached. Remove from grill and top with a thick slice of compound butter.



Best Butcher Shop in Town...



Joanna Hooper

with the best full service butchers!

Printed and distributed by:



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

Now open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Mon-Sat at both locations

*Come by the Town Center
location for the first
monthly summer open
house on Saturday, June 10,
starting at 10 a.m.*

