

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

May 2024

“We are not here to do what has already been done.”

— American artist Robert Henri

Lively Latin flavors

Chuck roast featured in May's recipe of the month



To find the recipe, go to SideDishSchnip.Substack.com and click on the Recipes tab. The column highlights a new recipe each month featuring Callicrate meats created by a local chef.

May's Recipe of the Month in Matthew Schniper's Side Dish newsletter was created by Chef Luis Pagan of The French Kitchen. It highlights marinated Callicrate Beef chuck roast in a rich safitro sauce made with tomatoes, garlic, tumeric, beef broth, dark beer, and mirasol pepper paste.

Peruvian Beef in Cilantro Sauce, shown above, is traditionally served with white rice and creamy Mayocoba beans. The garnish of green peas and diced red pepper adds an appealing pop of spring color to the dish.

Chuck roast is a very affordable cut, tender and meaty, ideal for slow cooking at low temps. (A crockpot makes the prep super-easy, although the oven or stovetop works too.) It comes from the shoulder or neck area on the animal.

Looking to the future of life on the plains

On a recent spring day, just before the start of calving season, Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate surveyed a landscape choked with blowing dust. Fierce winds were strafing across empty furrows with thin wheat stands. "Our biggest fight out here is the land blows. We've got to keep something on the surface to protect the soil," he said. Over the long term, irrigation saps the ground of valuable moisture. Even native grass can be a challenge to maintain. Last year hail ravaged the landscape. "Right now we're giving our grass time to recover," he said. "It can take ten years to get new grass established. So it won't be an easy transition, but we need to put all this land back into grass or dryland crops like barley to preserve our wells."



*"Farmer-feeders, the ones who grow their own crops to feed to their own cattle, used to be the backbone of the cattle industry. They helped keep cattle production independent, competitive and diversified. We are losing them due to the lack of local and regional markets. We need to relocalize the food system. Stop importing beef and raise our own."
— Mike Callicrate*

John Keller is one of many farmers and ranchers who rely on Callicrate Cattle Company to custom process their livestock. At the local sale barn in St. Francis, Kansas, he expressed gratitude for having a local processor.

HOW WAS THE PROCESSING?

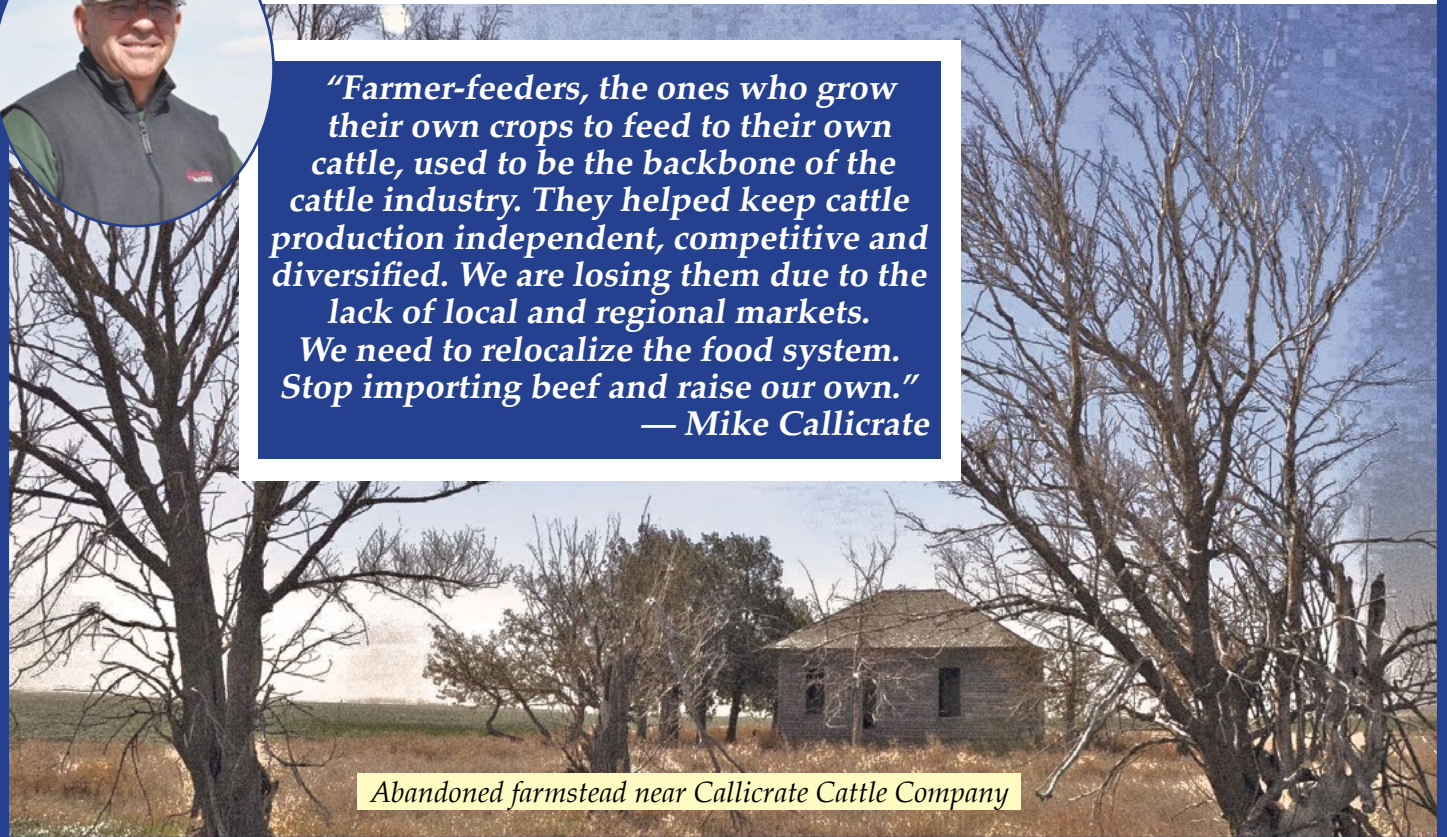
It was good. I like the way they packaged it. They have a beautiful facility here in town. We'll be taking more cattle in there. We've got a couple right now that are almost ready to go.

HOW ARE THINGS IN THE CATTLE BUSINESS? WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT IT?

I'm 83, and I've always fed out my cattle. I've never sold a feeder calf in my life. But this might be our last year. I don't like it, but it's just hard to compete. It's hard to get the finished cattle sold. The big guys won't let you make a dime. I don't know for sure what we're going to do. But in this whole county, I can only think of three farmer-feeders left that finish out their cattle.



Abandoned farmstead near Callicrate Cattle Company



From seed to grain to whole-grain goodness

Pueblo Seed and Food Company was featured recently in a series of articles on water-conservation farming practices in Colorado, published by Colorado State University. Owners Dan Hobbs and Nanna Meyer supply Ranch Foods Direct with open-pollinated nonGMO seeds and beautifully packaged whole grain products such as porridge, cream-of-wheat cereal and crackers.

Author Cahill Shpall, a fellow with Colorado's Food Systems Advisory Council, shared the story of how in 2012 the couple moved their farm from Pueblo to the isolated McElmo Valley in southwestern Colorado, where they can reduce the impact of pollen drift from neighboring farms and continue to refine openly pollinated crops best suited to arid conditions. Once primarily focused on seed sales, their three-decade farming enterprise now includes a storefront in downtown Cortez, which serves as a bakery, mill, history exhibit, seed cooperative and classroom. They are also exploring unique models of cooperative ownership for certain aspects of the business, in hopes of building longevity through a consistent, long-term workforce that will bring continuity to their life's work.

The couple reveres heritage grains, including the corn that was first introduced to the Southwestern U.S. from Mexico roughly 4,000 years ago. It took indigenous communities 2,000 years of experimentation to identify and cultivate varieties suited to the higher elevation and short growing season. As master dryland farmers, the native Hopi of the Four Corners region bred more than 19 different types of corn to suit their environment, as Dan explains in the article.

"Short attention spans and disconnect with the history of the land we inhabit leads us to see the water-related challenges we face in Colorado as if they are brand new," the author writes. "However, we are following in the footsteps of early farmers, but with added urgency, because our climate is changing much more quickly now than it was 2,000 years ago."

Get spring gardening supplies, including seed packets and natural soil amendments, at Ranch Foods Direct. Handcrafted grain products available year-round.

*Product
Feature*



Impending water transfer could put more strain on local food production

The esteemed chile breeder responsible for selecting and propogating Pueblo's most iconic pepper weighed in recently on a controversial water agreement that would allow the city of Aurora to take irrigation water out of the Arkansas Valley three years out of every ten in exchange for paying a private company \$80.4 million. Such a deal jeopardizes the region's already fragile, drought-stressed farm economy, said Mike Bartolo in an interview with Fresh Water News. "They're saying this isn't going to have much impact," he stated. "But there is going to be an impact, environmentally and politically." Bartolo features prominently in the new documentary film, recently released by the Palmer Land Conservancy, that highlights the threat confronting the traditional rural culture around Pueblo as surface water grows ever more scarce across the state. The agreement by Aurora is intended to offer a new approach, or alternative transfer method, that improves on the "buy-and-dry" schemes of the past, which decimated rural economies in places like Crowley County and left behind landscapes overgrown with tumbleweeds. But the idea remains controversial.



On screen and in person

The Palmer Land Conservancy will host the Colorado Springs premiere of the film, *Marisol: Looking at the Sun*, at 5:30 p.m. May 21 at the Ent Center for the Arts Recital Hall. The fundraising gala includes a reception, a viewing and a post-film discussion featuring filmmaker Ben Knight. Tickets and schedule of additional screenings at MirasolFilm.com.

In recent weeks, the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy voted unanimously to oppose the deal, pointing to a 2003 agreement that prohibits the fast-growing city from taking any more of the valley's water. In addition, the water district points out that local taxpayers made the initial investment to develop the infrastructure necessary to bring a reliable water supply to the valley back in the 1950s, and local taxpayers continue to pay the costs to maintain and operate that same infrastructure.

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