

Food for Thought

People · Products · Purpose

November 2022

"Passenger pigeons once darkened the sky. Caribou stretched from horizon to horizon. Salmon were so thick you could walk across water. But this is not the coin of the twenty-first century. We measure our wealth by different standards." — *Science writer/naturalist Sharman Apt Russell*

Her canvas is cake

Meet Ranch Foods Direct customer and local pastry chef Elyssa Attwood

Elyssa's background in fine arts translates into stunning designer cakes and pastries that are impressionistic, sometimes whimsical, often accented with organic patterns and design elements. She values quality ingredients and buys all of her meat from Ranch Foods Direct.

How did you find Ranch Foods Direct and why do you shop there?

I had some digestive issues early this year, in January or February, and it was pretty extreme. I was experiencing a lot of stress in my life at that point. I've always been pretty healthy and had done the whole Keto diet thing. But several different issues compounded together forced me to reconcile with my diet and really consider the source of my meat. Ultimately it pushed me to look for a local butcher. Ranch Foods Direct was recommended to me by multiple people, and I heard good things about the pork, beef and chicken. Getting connected with them has been pretty wonderful for me. I've really noticed a change in my health since I started getting my meat there. I think Ranch Foods Direct is a great business model. The store supports lots of local foodies, which I think is fantastic. By going there, I get to try unique products that aren't offered at generic stores. And I really appreciate the staff. They are so sweet and helpful. If they don't know the answer to something, they will go find it.

What are some of your favorite Ranch Foods Direct products?

Chicken thighs, beef, bratwurst, especially the jalapeno chile cheddar brats. I also like the beef tallow. I use it to glaze my pans before putting mushrooms or sweet potato fries in the oven for roasting. I've also used it in some of my baking; it helps preserve the moisture in baked goods.



Elyssa owns Tortoise Cakes, which offers a seasonal menu as well as custom orders and wedding cakes. Popular holiday items include the hazelnut chocolate cake and Italian-style macarons. Place orders for pickup or delivery at [TortoiseCakes.com](https://www.tortoisecakes.com).



The holidays are coming.

Turkey or ham? Turkey.

I come from a family of cooks and bakers who know how to do it right. I always go for the more red or pink part of the turkey.

Pies or cake? During the holidays I do prefer pies, even though I don't make them myself.

What holiday foods are you most looking forward to? Baklava.

Cranberry scones, which we always make. And cranberry kolaches. My grandmother is Mediterranean, and my mom adapted her recipe and made it even better. That's probably my favorite dessert of all time.

Linked in to LOCAL

Information technology has been a satisfying career for Russ Erbe, shown right with wife Kim at the Colorado Springs Sausage Fest, but food is his passion project and creative outlet. He shares his culinary talents through catering, by teaching cooking classes and, most recently, by developing a line of handcrafted sausages that quickly drew an enthusiastic following.

Beef or pork? Definitely beef. I'm from Texas.

Smoked or grilled? Smoking meat is my thing. In Texas, we smoke everything. I have a huge smoker and do a lot of barbecue catering with it.

What led you to become a Ranch Foods Direct customer? I moved to Colorado almost two years ago and immediately joined the Colorado Springs Foodie Group on Facebook. That's how I initially learned about it. And then I also became friends with Shawn Saunders, the owner of Sourdough Boulangerie, and he connected me. Not long after I got introduced to everybody, I had a private chef event for five people, and they wanted to do prime rib. I called (plant manager) Luis and asked if he could cut me one for this event. It's usually hard to find prime rib when it's not Christmas time. He cut me a beautiful prime rib, I cooked it for the event, and it blew my mind. For everyone at the table, it was hands-down the best prime rib any of us had ever had. I was a believer from then on. And I like knowing where the meat came from. I think people often times don't know or don't care until they have that ah-ha moment like I had with the prime rib.

Favorite Ranch Foods Direct product? I really like the beef cheek. I smoke it, put it in the crockpot and cook it overnight in beef tallow, then take it out



Ranch Foods Direct is the exclusive meat supplier for Russ Erbe's RK Prime Craft Sausage, delicious fully cooked smoked sausages made with care from the best ingredients, no fillers or fake colors or flavorings. RK Prime has a Facebook page or call or text Russ at 719-217-8159. View mouthwatering food photos on his personal Instagram account.

and shred it, and it becomes what we call beef barbacoa, for making tacos or whatever you want to do with shredded beef. That's a cut that's pretty hard to find.

Any new food prep methods or techniques you're really into? I'm kind of big into sous vide right now. I bought a commercial machine and the little tub it goes in. I do a lot of beef that way, like the prime rib that blew everyone's mind. I don't think there's a better way to cook beef and get it to the exact temperature you want.

You've said your end goal is to have a steak restaurant someday. What's the most memorable meal you've had dining out? In Texas, there are all these great little barbecue joints, and those are our favorites. Some of them aren't even restaurants, they're food trailers... you stand in line for like four hours and then eat outside at a picnic table. I'm not into the pretentious mood-lighting kind of dining scene.

The holidays are coming up. Turkey or ham? Definitely turkey. I smoke it typically.

What holiday foods are you most looking forward to? I like coming up with new sides. Last year for Christmas I made au gratin potatoes that were stacked in a muffin tin with peas, bacon and other stuff. They spooned right out and everyone got their own. So that's the kind of thing I enjoy doing. I like to challenge myself.



Where meat adventures start

Russ Erbe relies on RFD plant manager Luis (above) and in-store butcher Roger to get excellent customized cuts for his catering jobs. He finds new things to try mostly by linking up with other adventuresome cooks on social media. But recipes for him are just a rough guide or starting point for exploring new flavors and techniques. "One of my latest inventions was teaming up with Musso Farms of Pueblo to create a smoked Pueblo chile meatloaf," he says. The base recipe is what he calls the "Weber Grill meatloaf recipe" since he first discovered it on Weber's website years ago.

GRILLED (OR SMOKED) MEATLOAF

2 teaspoons sunflower oil
 1 onion, chopped fine
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 2/3 cup saltine crackers, crushed
 1/3 cup whole milk
 1 pound ground beef
 1 pound ground pork or sausage
 2 large eggs plus 1 large yolk
 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
 1/3 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
 3/4 tsp salt
 1/2 tsp black pepper

For the glaze:

1 cup ketchup
 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
 2 1/2 tablespoons cider vinegar
 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce

Set up your grill for indirect cooking with a foil drip pan and medium high temp of about 400°F. Heat the oil in a nonstick skillet on your side burner (or regular stove burner) over medium heat. Cook the onions until golden, about 6 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer to a large bowl and cool. Process saltines and milk in food processor until smooth, add the beef and pork and pulse until well combined, about ten 1-second pulses. Transfer meat mixture to bowl with cooled onion mixture, add eggs and

egg yolk, mustard, Worcestershire, thyme, parsley, 1 teaspoon salt and 3/4 teaspoon pepper and mix with hands until well combined. Transfer meat mixture to a sheet of foil and shape into 9- by 5-inch loaf. Wet your hands and smooth the top of the meatloaf. Place the meatloaf on indirect heat over the dip pan so that the grease drains into the pan, close the lid and let it cook for about 45 minutes at 400°. Add a handful of wood chips at this time for a smokier flavor. Meanwhile, make the glaze: Whisk all glaze ingredients in saucepan until sugar dissolves. Simmer the glaze over medium heat until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes.

Do not glaze the meatloaf until it forms a crust. After about 45 minutes take the temperature and glaze it for the first time. Brush with the glaze and cook about 10 more minutes. Repeat the glazing twice. When the meatloaf reaches 160° and is glazed, take it off the grill and let it rest for a few minutes. As a final step, if desired cut the meatloaf into one inch slices and place them back on the grill over direct heat to crisp the cut sides of the meatloaf. After the slices crisp up and have nice grill marks, move them to the indirect heat and glaze again with the remaining sauce.



Ranch Foods Direct will have locally made pies, cakes, cookies and other goodies throughout the holiday season from Steffi's Confections, Sourdough Boulangerie and other local bakers and food artisans.

Holiday dessert tip

Cake artist Elyssa Attwood uses a secret ingredient to make whipped cream thicker, fluffier and more stable: add 8 oz. mascarpone to 16 oz. freshly whipped cream. American cream cheese has a similar texture and effect but results in a noticeably tangy flavor.

FANCY WHIPPED CREAM

Whip together 1 cup heavy cream with 1 teaspoon honey or maple syrup. Then whip one-half cup mascarpone cheese (or cream cheese) and fold the two together.



#SHOPSMALL FOR THE HOLIDAYS



Support your favorite local food artisans on Saturday, Nov. 26, Small Biz Saturday, by shopping the Fillmore store!

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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:

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CLOSED Nov. 24 and 25 for Thanksgiving

Online at www.ranchfoodsdirect.com