September 2026

# Community Profiles

"When I fall let me fall without regret like a leaf."

*— Agrarian poet Wendell Berry (1934-2026)*

# Butcher happy to be back behind the counter

***Cheyenne Schulman feels right at home in her new role assisting with the fresh meat case at Ranch Foods Direct. Her background in cooking and butchery goes way back. Here she talks more about that and shares the scoop on a new product, thinly sliced Shabu-style steak meat.***

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR CULINARY BACKGROUND.**

I was a chef for about seven years. I worked for some of the best chefs in the state — John Casto, Brother Luck and all the chefs I went to school with at Pikes Peak Community College. My family owned the butcher shop in Woodland Park, the Woodland Butcher Block. I ran that with them for five years. We did a lot of smoking there. We would do 100 to 200 pounds of jerky in two days. We also did snack sticks, Thanksgiving turkeys and prime rib at Christmastime.

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**YOUR FAMILY'S SHOP CLOSED, RIGHT? HOW SAD WAS THAT FOR YOU?**

It was very sad. That was supposed to be my baby. I was helping to run it, processing animals, doing anything and everything that needed to be done for five years.

**WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO RANCH FOODS DIRECT?**

The end goal for me is to own a butcher shop again, so I needed to get back into butchering. I ran a kitchen for three years, but once this opened, I jumped at it. Getting a call back was such a blessing because it's hard to find butchering positions. It's a lost artform for sure.

**DID YOU ENJOY YOUR RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE?**

I loved being a cook. I've been cooking since I was four. I was cooking homemade food for my grandma already at age four. I started in culinary school when I was in high school and fell in with all these really good chefs who trained me and taught me so much.

**WHAT ARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF THE STORE?**

I love this place. I used to shop here all the time before I got the job here. I'm a meat snob since I owned a butcher shop. I can't eat grocery store meat anymore. It doesn't taste good to me. I eat the soups here every day. I've tried about everything in the store. I'm picky, and I'll tell you if I don't like something, but everything here is really good. When I saw the opening, I was really excited, and I jumped at the chance.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU MOST LIKE TO COOK?**

I cook a little of everything, sushi, rib-eyes, Indian food, Italian food, you name it. I've pretty much done it all. Chicken piccata is one of my favorites. It's an Italian dish. Honestly, though, I love cooking up steaks. Our Wagyu New York strips are so good. I really love that too. If anyone needs help on how to cook something, I'm here for them.

**TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE NEW SHABU-STYLE STEAK CUT. HAVE YOU TRIED IT YET?**

I've been using it to make my own jerky. I let it sit in a marinade for about two days, let it tenderize, and then finish it in the smoker. The smoke is a preserving and curing agent. Definitely it's a unique product compared to anything else you can find in town. Customers are always asking, *what is that?* You could use it for Korean barbecue or tacos or Philly cheese steaks. It's an easy way to make kabobs too. Just thread it on the skewers and it cooks fast. That's a benefit because a lot of people don't want to wait so long for it to cook.

**NEW IN STORE: Paper-thin Shabu-style shaved Wagyu steak meat. Look for it in the freezer case. $13.89 per lb.**

# Fall is the ideal time to apply biochar to compost

*Ranch Foods Direct was at the forefront in promoting biochar to regenerate depleted soils*

More farmers and gardeners continue to discover the benefits of biochar for enhancing soil fertility, plant yield and growth. Fall is the ideal time to incorporate pyrolyzed char material into compost so it is ready to apply to gardens in the spring, according to Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate.

"You get a lot more benefit after it's been charged in a compost pile," he explains. "That way it's loaded with all the microbial life that makes nutrients more available to growing plants."

Biochar's porous structure acts like a sponge, drawing and harboring microbes, fungi and plant nutrients, and increasing water-holding capacity.

Among commercial farmers there's growing interest in adopting biochar use across broader acreages. The Colorado Ag Water Alliance recently hosted a webinar highlighting reports from two farmers who received grants to conduct multi-year on-farm trials.

Michael Lobato, a farmer and researcher at CSU's Fruita Experiment Station in western Colorado, found biochar injected into the soil with a golf course aerator increased soil moisture retention and nutrient availability when compared with non-treated strips. "Does biochar increase soil moisture? Over four years of studies now, we can say, yes, it does," he confirmed.

The biochar also improved fiber quality and digestibility of forage crops over that same period.

Glenn Wollam, a Weld County farmer, mixes biochar with composted manure, yard waste and spent brewers' yeast to make a soil supplement that he says has increased his soil's drought resilience and productivity.

"My soil's not blowing as much anymore, even in this drought," he said. Nor is he turning up big clods that have to be broken up with mulching equipment, he added.

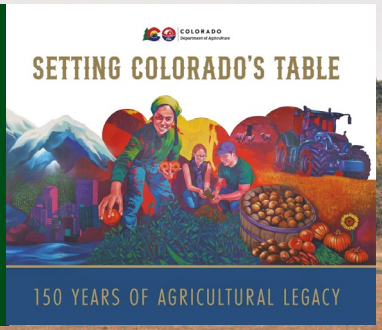
**Buy it by the bag; in-store now**

At Callicrate Cattle Company, a small amount of biochar is mixed with manure and applied with a compost spreader that breaks it up to a fine consistency so it spreads evenly in fields where it's needed. Biochar is typically applied at a rate of 5 to 10 percent. "Our customers who have used it, love it," Mike said. "Once they've applied it, it's essentially in the soil forever. No need to apply it again."

**DID YOU KNOW? ... Every Granny Smith apple is cloned from the same tree that originated in Australia in the 1850s, thanks to the use of modern grafting techniques. Expeditionary photographer Dornith Doherty discovered this fact while documenting 20 of the world's largest seed banks. Images from the project, which strive to capture the botanical wonder of seeds as well as heroic efforts made to preserve them, are part of a nature-themed exhibit on display at UCCS's Ent Center for the Arts through October 10th.**

**A few blocks away at Colorado College's Fine Arts Center, Barbadian artist Annalee Davis (left) examines the loss of genetic diversity through a different lens. Raised on an old sugar plantation where she still lives, Davis creates portraits of people and plants using old ledger paper as a canvas, contrasting the straight lines and rigid computational numbers on the ledgers with the softer organic shapes that occur in nature. Her wall-size collage of native specimens captures some of the wild beauty that's been lost to monoculture farming. During the exhibit's opening reception, she explained that as the productivity of the plantations declined, much of the land was abandoned and replaced by development. With tourism now accounting for nearly half of all economic activity on the Caribbean island, public access to its beaches is severely limited for ordinary citizens. The exhibit remains on view through December 5.**

***Sales of Colorado History's new book, Setting Colorado's Table by head curator Rachael Storm, helps to support the state's soil health program, which debuted in 2021. Learn more at HistoryColorado.org***



# Featured Recipe

## Hawaiian BBQ Chicken

Start with 3 lbs. Ranch Foods Direct chicken thighs, boneless and skinless or for a mixed Hawaiian plate as shown 1½ lbs. each chicken and flanken ribs

FOR THE MARINADE: 1 1/3 cup brown sugar, lightly packed if measuring by the cup (or 10 oz. by weight)
1/3 C. boiling water
4 oz. mirin
2 oz. Chinese Shaoxing wine (or a dry sherry, sake or more mirin)
16 oz. low-sodium soy sauce
6-8 garlic cloves, peeled, crushed and roughly chopped
3- or 4-inch pieces fresh ginger, sliced into ¼-inch-thick cross sections and then crushed a bit
½ bunch green onions, chopped about ¼-inch thick
1 tsp. black pepper, freshly ground
¼ tsp. red chili flakes (optional)

TO MAKE THE MARINADE: In a medium-sized, non-reactive bowl mix your brown sugar and boiling water with Shaoxing wine and mirin. Stir until brown sugar starts to dissolve. Add soy sauce, garlic, ginger, green onions, black pepper and red chili flakes. Mix everything until the sugar is dissolved and it begins to smell like Hawaiian barbecue dreams. Remove about 1 cup of the mix, avoiding the lovely large chunks of ginger and garlic. You want to save this to use for glazy goodness when the meat is done grilling. Set this aside in the fridge for later. With the remaining mix, put the meat into the marinade, turn and toss everything around to coat completely making sure it is submerged using a zipper-locking plastic bag. Flip halfway through your marinade time for best results.

TO GRILL THE MEAT: Preheat grill to high heat for about 15 minutes, then bring it down to medium. Remove the chicken from the marinade with tongs and let the marinade drip off as much as you can, then place it on the grill and let it just be. Don't move it for about 5 to 7 minutes. (If you mess with it too soon, it will stick.) Continue to cook, turning as needed to get charred grill marks and beautiful golden caramelized flavor and color. The internal temp with an instant-read thermometer at the thickest point should be 165 degrees when it's completely cooked. Remove and place on a plate; cover and let rest for about 5-10 minutes before serving.

### Recipe by Private Chef Amy Fairbanks

This dish pays homage to the chef's childhood in Hawaii. She recommends serving the meat on a bed of 3 cups sliced green cabbage garnished with chopped green onions plus a drizzle of reserved marinade. The marinade recipe makes about 4 cups, which should be enough to marinate 3 pounds of meat.

SIDE DISH SCHNIPER

*This recipe series is a collaboration with SideDishSchniper.com*

# Lots of new products in stock to sample this fall

*CREATIVE SPIN: Locally made kombucha ice cream from our friend Janie at nearby Springs Culture*

*TORTILLAS WITH TRADITION: Masa Blanca brings traditional tortilla corn and real lime mineralization back to Colorado's Front Range! Purchases support developing a regional seed bank*

*NEW FOR YOUR PET: 4-oz bags of freeze-dried liver treats for cats and dogs...loaded with nutrition*

## Celebrate Octoberfest

*Bristol Brewing's taproom at Ivywild serves Callicrate smoked bratwursts alongside their seasonal brews*

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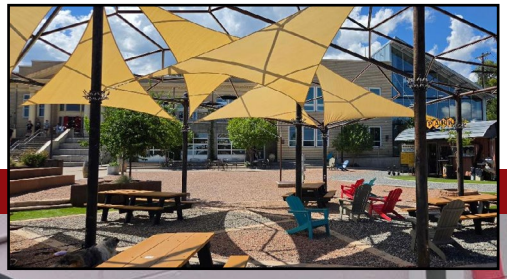

# Community Profiles

**Distributed by:**

<u>Two retail locations in Colorado Springs</u>
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.
Or shop online. Shipping available.

**Building community around local food**

Store updates posted on Facebook

PEAK TO PLAINS FOOD HUB

Edited by Candace Krebs
candacejk@aol.com