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Rare Meat

Food · People · Recipes · Ideas



April 2011

"I love the culture of grilling. It takes the formality out of entertaining. Everyone wants to get involved."—Chef Bobby Flay

Enhance your grill skills with class by local barbecue expert

Ed and Kathy Bousquet turned their enthusiasm for backyard grilling into a business six years ago, opening local favorite Barbeque Mercantile. If anything, the recession seems to have fired up their business, Ed says.

"With the changes in the economy, more people are interested in learning to cook or grill at home. In fact, nationwide, outdoor grilling and entertaining is now the number one past-time, exceeding golf or any other popular outdoor activity."

Grilling can be intimidating. That's why Ed has been invited to appear at Ranch Foods Direct on April 13 to share his well-honed grill skills. "When it comes to grilling, some of our most asked questions are how to grill a steak without overcooking it, what are the best cuts to grill and what temperatures are best to grill at," says RFD's Leona Espinoza.

Ed will demonstrate two types of grills, a wood pellet and a charcoal-fired version. "The grills we sell are the least susceptible to wind or temperature variations," he says. "These grills make it easy, and they can be used year-round."

The Barbeque Mercantile specializes in the Traeger wood pellet grill, which has a digital thermometer built in so it "cooks food consistently no matter what the temperature



outside," Ed says. It offers the convenience of a gas grill that turns on at the flip of a switch, but without the threat of gas fires. "You're not focusing on fighting flare-ups, you're focusing on the food and your friends," he notes. In addition, they sell a patio smoker from Goodwin Industries that smokes and grills



simultaneously. All models begin at around \$799.

Ed plans to emphasize cooking "low and slow" (keeping the temperature in an optimal range activates the natural enzymes in the meat that breakdown the muscle fibers, he says) but also shake things up with a quick hot-coals cooking method that creates a dazzling presentation. He'll bring examples of multiple temperature measuring devices but also share his trick for how to test for doneness, using just a pair of tongs. Participants will sample several mouthwatering grilled meats.

The first warm spring days are enough to get the juices flowing among avid grillers; the festive Old Colorado City store is already abuzz. "We send everybody down to Ranch Foods Direct for good natural meats. The rib-eye is over the top, and the briskets are outstanding," Ed says.

COME AND GRILL IT! Ed Bousquet will answer all your burning questions about outdoor grilling at a special class at 10 a.m. Wednesday, April 13, weather permitting. (Backup date is Wednesday, April 20.) Cost is \$15, which includes a \$10 gift certificate for shopping Ranch Foods Direct. Call to sign-up.

Good food steward

At Denver's Fuel Cafe, Chef Bob Blair is on a mission to procure healthy ingredients

Bob Blair's Fuel Cafe has been variously described as "funky," "hip," "eclectic," a "cook's studio" off the beaten path. His outpost, with its unique "garage chic" vibe, is in the heart of the city but away from heavy traffic and chain restaurants — and he likes it that way. "I want creative minded people to come seek us out and trust us to prepare something that's unexpected and great and not always the same thing," he says.

While the menu changes frequently — the team serves "intensely seasonal food based on the weather and the whims of the chef" — the beef is consistently and exclusively from Ranch Foods Direct.

His relationship with the company is the culmination of a long journey toward healthier, more sustainably produced food, that has roots in his childhood (his dad was a holistic health practitioner and some of his fondest boyhood memories are of the family garden.) But his odyssey really kicked into high gear back in November when he served a meal to Jeffrey Smith, author of *Seeds of Deception*, a book of warning about genetic modification. Bob felt like

he was doing a good job of sourcing clean ingredients (he uses organic flours, sugar, milk and grains) until the author asked him about his cooking oils. Standard canola and

soybean oils have some of the highest levels of GM material. Four diligent months later, Bob finally hunted down a viable alternative — rice bran oil.

Around the same time, a couple of his employees introduced him to Ranch Foods Direct, a favorite supplier at the Denver Urban Homesteading farmers market. In February, Bob paid

a visit to Callicrate Cattle Co. to see if it was the right fit to supply his restaurant. "It was a huge eye-opener for me," he says. "I wasn't aware of how devoted owner Mike Callicrate was to doing things the right way and how involved he has been with leaders in the sustainable food movement. He is doing things that prove he's committed to the cause."

Bob's not sure what impressed him more: the field of happy calves with their mothers; the composted manure that was being sent to Venetucci Farm to improve the soil there; Callicrate's stories of wrestling with the big meatpackers, eventually retrofitting his cattle operation to



Recipe Recommendations

Bob Blair's favorite chicken recipe is the classic **Zuni Cafe Roasted Chicken and Bread Salad**. It's too lengthy to include here, but it's easy to find on-line by doing a quick internet search.

For a dish of spring flavors that includes grilled lamb and asparagus (arriving at Ranch Foods Direct this month from the Arkansas Valley) try **Lamb Lollipops**: Cut two racks of lamb into chops with one bone per. Place between pieces of plastic wrap and gently pound or press until doubled in size. Rub the chops with oil and chopped rosemary, season with salt and pepper. Allow to set 30 minutes at room temp prior to grilling. Meanwhile, make a yogurt dipping sauce; mix 1 cup plain yogurt and 1/4 cup fresh chopped mint, allow one hour in the fridge to meld flavors. Serve with roasted russet potatoes and steamed asparagus.

(Recipe online along with many more at www.americanlamb.com.)

focus on sustainability or the outfit's commitment to helping other small farms and reviving local economies.

Bob plans to convey what he's learned to his customers, using among other things a smartphone bar code on the menu that will take people directly to a video of his ranch visit. He will also talk about why it's important to go to such lengths when he lectures to culinary students at Johnson & Wales. "I want to emphasize to them that we're supposed to be *stewards of food*. People need to be able to trust that we are serving them good, healthy products," he says.

Absolutely any cut of Callicrate Beef wins his praises. "We love them all," he says. "I honestly don't care what we get. I'll figure out a way to turn it into something interesting. That's the art of cooking seasonally."

At Venetucci, 'black gold' fortifies soils

As Venetucci Farm busily prepares for another growing season, farmer Susan Gordon (right) and her family are planting cover crops like wheat and clover for pasturing their pigs and chickens in a rotational grazing program and applying composted manure from Callicrate Cattle Co., which she calls black gold. "It's great stuff. And I know it's coming from healthy cows," she says. The 190-acre farm along Fountain Creek grows an amazing array of produce throughout the summer, but restoring the health of soils conventionally farmed for



decades is a challenge. "The soils are depleted, because that's what happens to the soil when you grow annual crops year after year," Susan says. Livestock play a revitalizing role: "We can already see the benefits where we graze our grassfed cattle."

"The sad story of modern industrial agriculture is that with the increasing specialization of larger and larger farms, we've lost the connection between animals and plants grown together, which creates a natural cycle of health," says Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate. "Manure from naturally raised livestock is nature's best fertilizer."

Put your hands in the dirt... Venetucci Farm hosts a volunteer day Saturday, April 16, from 10 a.m. to 3. Be part of planting 10,000 onions! Sign up online at www.ppcf.org/Venetucci.

*"In India cow dung is worshipped because it is the source of renewal of soil fertility and hence the sustainability of human society. The cow has been made sacred in India because it is a keystone species for agro-ecosystems — it is key to the sustainability of agriculture."
— Environmental Activist Vandana Shiva*



Chef and restaurateur Bob Blair, above left, visits with Mike Callicrate at Callicrate Cattle Company. Pictured at right is one of the happy cows (and a new baby) that are part of the spring landscape at the ranch.





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*"You can't have the family farm without the family."
— G.K. Chesterton*

Market Tips & Trivia

From Retail Manager Leona Espinoza

Ranch Foods Direct has four main divisions. **The retail store** is as close to your local butcher shop as you can get! We are more than happy to accommodate our customers by providing specialty and portion cuts, including steaks cut to order, usually with one day's advance notice. **Our wholesale division** provides meat to over 90 restaurants and institutions, including District 11 and Chipotle Mexican Grill. Just ask, and we'll provide a complete list. **The Home Service division** transforms your current day-to-day grocery shopping trips into a simple solution for getting food into your home. Pete Vieth assesses your family's size and lifestyle, and customizes a menu to fit your budget. In exchange for a no-obligation consultation, you receive a \$20 gift certificate to shop our store and see what wonderful products are available. **Our custom division** provides custom processing for about 40 private labels, typically small farmers who direct-market what they raise. Callicrate Beef is also sold as halves or quarters. **Thanks, everyone, for your loyalty and support!**

*Did you know?... 84% of the seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported!
During Lent, enjoy RFD's great selection of quality U.S. seafood.*

Shop Ranch Foods Direct for your Easter lamb, ham, duck or sausages!

*Plus... new in store...
Fresh greens and Anasazi beans from Austin Family Farm.
Locally made Ugly Dawg salsa.
Donna's country style artisan loaves. Need gluten-free? RFD carries Outside the Breadbox.*

Coming this month! Local asparagus from Joe Mauro.

Find lamb time-and-temp cooking charts, tips and recipes at americanlamb.com.