



Breeder Profile:

Bruce & Beth Meyer

We own a small farm, in south central MN and raise buffalo, beefalo, Red Wattle hogs, chickens, turkeys and ducks. In addition, we grow open-pollinated corn, alfalfa and oats to feed our animals, as well as 45 different fruits and vegetables for us to eat. For the past five years, we have been fully self-sustaining with no outside income or off-farm jobs. The main source of our farm income is our direct-marketing meat business. We sell our meat through our farm-store & by quarters and halves through an annual newsletter & ordering system that we created. One of the best parts of our farm is our Red Wattle hogs. Bruce purchased his first Red Wattle in 1984. He had experience with other hogs, but liked the disposition and meat qualities of the Red Wattle so much that he transi-

tioned over to all pure-bred registered Red Wattles by 2000-01, with two boars and three sows that he purchased from Cecil Edgar and Clyde Grover. From this closed herd of five animals, we have selectively bred over the past ten years, culling hard for traits that we deemed undesirable and watching closely for any signs of genetic weakness. We have chosen to breed for a long, lean animal with a straight, broad back, good sized hams and a flavorful, firm meat with just the right amount of fat in the bacon area. Since our meat business has always been our main income source, we put all our efforts into raising pigs that grow to a comfortable butcher weight of about 300 lbs. live weight in 5 - 7 months, where their meat is still tender yet flavorful. With the leaner pig, our fin-



ished weights run about 65-70% of the hanging weights. Other traits that we have bred for are gentle, friendly dispositions both in boars and sows, good mothering abilities, and medium sized litters of 8 - 12, that could easily be sustained and raised by the sow. Even with the very small Red Wattle gene pool, we have seen very diverse conformation, disposition and fat content. We are still amazed even today at how much diversity there is even within a litter, and we pick out only what we feel are the best ones to keep or sell for breeding stock. All of our animals are raised on open pasture or are free-ranging in the case of the poultry. This helps sustain the health and nutrient value of the land, which in turn helps ensure the

health of the animals and ultimately the health of the humans who eat our meat products. We care deeply about these wonderful animals and we encourage all who are interested in saving this breed to develop your own direct market meat business, which will ultimately ensure their survival.

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Notes from the VP: Nathan Melson

This article has been edited for space.

. Recently, we have been faced with another round of issues on our farm including equipment breakdowns, the thousands of dollars in costs associated with that, and internet service issues that have added up. With all these things happening and spending large amounts of money every time we turn around, I sometimes wonder if the role that we've chosen to play in this world, to provide local food for North Texas, is all worth it. I also wonder if I will ever be truly satisfied with living, working, and marketing what our farm has to offer. Sometimes it seems like one step forward and two steps back! We ask ourselves, on a regular basis if this is what we should be doing, and deep down the answer continues to be that we are still truly satisfied. I don't think we really would be happy if we were doing something else. I believe that we, as a society, will have to learn to be "Locally Satisfied" as the cost of living increases and we are pushed to live in a more efficient and less wasteful manner. Dr. Wes Jackson at the The Land Institute in Salina, KS wrote a book several years ago: *Becoming Na-*

tive to This Place. He goes through a brief history of the US, and then starts a long, well thought out and educated discussion on how we will have to learn to live "more" as a society with less. One of the major discussions of the book is how we will have to learn to work with nature in agricultural production to produce more with less intensive inputs. Many of the farms in the North Texas already on the learning curve to transition to this type of agriculture as a proactive and market driven measure. Our farm is one of these! Many times my mind wanders, as I do chores around our farm. Thoughts such as where my family and I should take a small trip to get away, what I could do for recreation/entertainment outside the farm, or what conference to go to next to learn a new grass-fed farming technique. However, as I'm doing these same chores I also think of how much our county and our farm has to offer in beauty and resources, and how I probably take a lot of our farm for granted. Even though we own a farm we are always seeing everything



Brian Jordan talking with Nathan at his farm in Texas

we haven't done or need to do, folks and customers that visit us tell us how nice or how pretty our farm is. I sometimes have a hard time telling folks "thank you" because I'm thinking about all the things that need to be done. Besides, when you live and work on a farm you sometimes forget about the recreational opportunities right here on our farm without ever having to leave. You don't have to leave your house, farm, community, or county to actually participate in recreation. Just on our farm we can hunt, fish, crawfish, hike, bike, ride a horse, camp, practice photography, have a hay hauling contest, participate in sport shooting, swim, or any number of things that I've left out. As I work on our farm, I try to teach myself to be con-

tent with what I'm working on, where I'm working, and what I'm doing make a living. God has blessed us even though I sometimes can't see the forest for the trees. Again, I think farm folks like us tend to unintentionally take our farms and lifestyles for granted instead of taking them for their real value, and the importance our role has been and will be in feeding, fueling, and clothing people locally. While we still have some time before we are forced to make some major decisions, we will have to become more satisfied with living locally and producing consumable products like food, fiber, and probably even fuel sources more locally. I recently watched a film called "The Power of Community", which documented how the country of Cuba had to

VP Notes continued from page 2

learn to become extremely self sufficient after the fall of the Soviet Union, their major supplier of energy, fertilizer, and food. They had to relearn how to small farm again, and did massive amounts of research on organic farming techniques and fertilizers. Since this major time of transition in the early 1990's and even though they have had a major shift in lifestyle, the Cuban society maintains an average life-span and health that is as good as or better than many Americans. Also, farmers are now among the country's highest paid workers, and the farming profession has professionals from other parts of society moving into farming because of this. The transition to a greatly different and possibly more rewarding way of life should be taken now before we have to go through five or more years of major discomfort like Cuba. Plus, us

farmers, might start being important to American society while actually producing an income worth our salt with minimum debt.

I mentioned the book *Becoming Native to This Place* earlier. According to Dr. Jackson and others the transition will take creativity, know-how, knowledge, gumption, charity, cooperation, education, and sustainable capitalism. With this effort the payoff will be truly sustainable agriculture, society, environment, and economy. To accomplish this we must become satisfied with living local. This will mean a resurgence in small creative businesses, productive direct marketing family farms, farmers markets, restaurants that source locally, sustainable energy production, local tourism, local vacations, and local economies. We will have to learn to enjoy what "local" has to offer. This "Local Lifestyle" will take

some getting used to for most of us. However, it could be a truly sustainable, long term way of life that helps us cope with the loss of cheap energy and cheap fossil fuels. We could take this for a paradigm shift that will be good for America as a whole, or we can take it the negative route. I'd choose to take the high road and I hope that you will too. Please support this transition to local any way you have the opportunity. This would include buying locally produced fruits, vegetables and meat; staying in a locally owned bed & breakfast; driving through the countryside and visiting your local family farmers (It would probably be polite to call ahead.); and eating at locally owned restaurants. I'm trying to retrain my way of thinking so that I can be "Locally Satisfied." I believe that American society will be better for it!

Advice from them that's doing - Marketing to restaurants

Donna O'Shaughnessy & Keith Parrish of South Pork Ranch and Dairy have been successfully marketing RW pork to restaurants in Chicago. Recently I had a chance to sit down with Donna and pick her brain about her experience marketing to restaurants. From our interview I gleaned the following advice to those who want to pursue this marketing route .

1. Just do it! Pick up the phone and make some calls.
2. Be friendly.
3. Be considerate of the chef's time. Don't call during their busy times.
4. Approach the restaurants that are worthy of your RW pork.
5. Use the "Contact" button on the restaurant website to make contact by email.
6. Drop off a snack pack so they can try your product.

7. Follow up with email or phone calls.
8. Network, network, network
9. Deliver on what you promise.
10. Don't give up. Not every restaurant will buy from you. But some will. Keep trying.
11. The chefs want to meet and get to know the farmer. Delivering the meat personally is great PR.



Donna

Now you can promote your farm on the website with a banner ad. Ads are \$30/yr for RWHA members or \$50/ yr for nonmembers. Ads are to promote farms only— no product e.g. fertilizers, wormers, buildings, etc. Ads must be "standard" banner ads either JPEG, GIF, or PNG image files, The size of the image being either 728x90 or 468x60 (pixels). The advertiser will need to design their own ad and provide the properly sized image file, plus a URL (your website or blog) to link to when the image is clicked. If you need help with the design or sizing please contact Dot Jordan: redwattles@hotmail.com. To reserve your space email your ad to: redwattles@hotmail.com Send fee to: RWHA, 7024 Spearsville Rd, Morgantown, IN 46160 If you prefer you can send the ad on a disk to the address above.

How to contact chefs from a chef's perspective by Chris Eley

Chris is a chef and the owner of Goose the Market, a gourmet market in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Typical mistakes that people make when marketing to chefs is a take it or leave it thought process. It is my recommendation that when approaching a restaurant or chef to carry your product there are three very simple steps that they will appreciate in the long run.

The first is a phone call or email just to drop off some product samples and information. They will tell you at this time if they are even interested in checking out your product. If they agree, this allows the producer to give the product directly to the person making the decisions as well as a quick face to face introduction. At this point, don't try to lay it all on the line. Just establish a relationship, give them samples and ask if it would be alright to follow up with a phone call or email after they try the product. Don't fall for the "I will call you after we try it". This is not normally intentional, but rather because chefs are busy and more than likely they will forget to call. If they

don't call don't be offended.

The second recommendation is to be prepared with materials. Just a quick one page sheet with facts about your farm, about your product and about your availability. Price sheets are also a good idea at this point. You have to know what you want to get out of the restaurant. This helps to take a look at their menu before you go. See what items you can offer them at quantities that you can keep up with. For example, if they have pork chops on their menu but you have no problem selling all of your loins each week then target them with something else. If you see, a braised pork shoulder on their menu take a pork shoulder sample. Your product should speak for itself, so don't try to be pushy. Just give them the facts, the samples, be honest and answer any questions they may have.

The final step is to follow through. Again, don't wait for their phone call. Give them five to seven days. Long enough to try the product but not long enough to forget about you. Here I would recommend a quick phone call. Just to see if they

have any questions and to get their feedback. See if there is anything else they would like to see. By this time you will know whether or not they are interested. Don't waste your time if they brush you off. If you are turned down or brushed off wait another month and see if there is anything you can do for them. Keep building the relationship even if they don't purchase anything from you, they may know someone who will.



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2010 Election of Officers and Board of Directors Members at Large

The following offices will be up for election this fall: Vice president and 2 positions on the Board of Directors for Members at large.

To serve in office a person needs to be a member in good standing of the RWHA.

Currently the VP is Nathan Melson. He is serving a one year term to fill the position vacated by Brian Jordan when he was elected President. The newly elected VP will serve a 3 year term.

The Member at Large positions on the board are currently held by Jesse Adams and Clyde Grover. These Board of Di-

rector positions are for a one year term. The Board of Directors is made up of the three elected officers (President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer) and 2 Members at Large. The board is charged with making decisions regarding RWHA business. Members meet quarterly by conference call.

If you would like to run for office or if you would like to nominate someone for office please send an email to:

redwattles@hotmail.com

Profiles of candidates will be included in the Summer issue of this news letter.

The new officers will be announced at

the RWHA national meeting in November.

Deadline for nomination is:

July 15, 2010

**Submit your article
now for the Summer
RWHA Newsletter.**