

Making America Organic...One Home At a Time!



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Mad Cow Boosts Natural Beef Sales

Back in 1986, with red meat becoming a dirty word in a more health-conscious United States, a group of cattle ranchers gathered in Doc and Connie Hatfield's barn to talk about finding a new market for their beef.

After hearing from a trainer at a health club, they chose what has come to be known as natural beef – produced without growth hormones or antibiotics, and fed exclusively vegetable feeds -- and market it directly to natural food stores, where they could get a premium price.

"We were going broke. We were whining about how tough things were," said Connie Hatfield, one of the founders of the co-op Country Natural Beef, widely sold as Oregon Country Beef. Then "we found out about the market for antibiotic- and hormone-free beef."

Thanks to concerns about mad cow disease, the success of natural foods stores and Americans' growing desire to know where their food comes from, natural meat is one of the beef industry's fastest-growing sectors.

Over the past 10 years, Oregon Country Beef has gone from processing 3,400 head a year to 40,000. Since the mad cow scare in 2003, production has more than doubled, with a 73 percent increase over the past year.

Estimated at \$500 million to \$550 million a year, the market for natural and organic beef accounts for less than 1 percent of overall U.S. beef production, but is growing at about 20 percent annually, while overall beef production of 24.6 billion pounds this year is down from 25.1 billion in 1995, according to the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

Under the U.S. Department of Agriculture definition, almost anyone can slap a "natural" label on minimally processed beef. But through the efforts of ranchers and natural beef marketers, natural beef has come to be defined as raised without antibiotics

or growth hormones, and never fed the meat byproducts that can carry mad cow disease. Organic beef must meet strict regulations, including the requirement that cattle eat only organic feed.

One of the pioneers and industry leaders is Coleman Purely Natural in Golden, Colorado. Chairman Mel Coleman Jr., the company will be pressing the USDA to make the "natural" label for beef more definitive.



"The trend has changed," Coleman said. "Consumers today have become much more aware."

The growing demand has moved natural beef into mainstream stores. For example, Laura's Lean meats are sold in Albertson's and Fred Meyer stores in Oregon, and shoppers on Fresh Direct, a New York-based Internet grocer, can choose from USDA choice top sirloin steak for \$4.99 a pound and Creekstone Farms antibiotic-free choice top sirloin for \$5.99.

At the Newport Avenue Market in Bend, Oregon, where all the beef sold is Oregon Country Beef, most customers are looking for taste and tenderness, meat manager Randy Yochum said.

But many are also like swim instructor Ulani Levy, whose father is a toxicologist, and who's concerned about antibiotics in her food and hormones given to cattle to make them grow faster.

"I'll be eating this the rest of my life," she said, packages of natural T-bone steaks in her hand.

Still, Coleman said he can count on the fingers of both hands the outfits doing more than \$1 million a year in sales.

Michael Boland, professor of agricultural economics at Kansas State University, figures the higher prices paid for natural beef – around 20 percent -- are eaten up by the higher costs of
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October 18-20, 2005

Harvest Blend Regular

- Purple Carrots
- Cucumber
- Broccoli
- Spinach
- Yellow Onions
- Romaine Lettuce
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Haas Avocado
- Jonagold Apples
- Starkrimson Pears
- Strawberries
- Kiwi
- Valencia Oranges

See the web site for details on our other options. Produce bag contents are subject to change based on availability.

You Don't Say

"We are living in a world today where lemonade is made from artificial flavors and furniture polish is made from real lemons." - Alfred E. Newman

"The highway is replete with culinary land mines disguised as quaint local restaurants that carry such reassuring names as Millie's, Pop's and Capt'n Dick's." - Bryan Miller

"I idolized my mother. I didn't realize she was a lousy cook until I went into the army." - Jackie Gayle

"Life expectancy would grow by leaps and bounds if green vegetables smelled as good as bacon." - Doug Larson

"Beware the term 'local delicacy.' It's usually code for something revolting." - Lillian Marsano

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raising them. A sick animal that has to be treated with antibiotics drops out of the program and no growth hormone means cattle gain weight slower.

And while it's easy to get as much as a 70 percent premium for steaks, it is tough to get any more for the end meats – briskets, chuck and rounds, Boland said.

Oregon Country Beef made a key move last year when it made a deal with Burgerville, a Vancouver, Wash., chain dedicated to locally produced and sustainable foods, to produce all their hamburger.

Jack Graves, chief cultural officer for Burgerville, said the chain was looking for a safe source of beef after the mad cow scare in 2003, and held back sales to give Oregon Country Beef time to meet Burgerville's demand of 35,000 pounds a week.

Oregon Country Beef's growth has also been tied to getting into dozens of Whole Foods Markets, a chain with 176 stores in the United States, Britain and Canada, and 65 more in development.

The main thing keeping natural beef from going mainstream is distribution, said Fedele Bauccio, CEO of Bon Appetit Management Co., in Palo Alto, California, which serves only natural beef at cafes on college and corporate campuses in 26 states.

"These guys are up against the Monsantos of the world -- genetically modified products, big agriculture," said Bauccio. "I think Whole Foods is growing faster than Wal-Mart. I don't know if they will ever catch them. But there is a huge population that cares about what they put in their bodies."

Recipes

Janet's Carrot Salad

- 1 bunch carrots, peeled and grated
- 1/2 to 1 cup dried parsley
- 8 tbsp dried mint
- 6 tbsp garlic powder
- 6 tbsp powdered cumin
- dash of Tabasco sauce
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup lemon juice

Mix all ingredients an hour ahead of time and leave out for the flavors to meld at room temperature. It will keep for 5 days in the refrigerator.

Vegan Carrot Soup

- 1 bunch carrots
- 12 oz tofu, silken preferred
- 1 1/2 cups water
- up to 1/2 cup rice cream
- 1 cup vegan stock broth
- 1/8 tsp lemon peel
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg
- 1/4 cup parsley

Steam carrots in a steamer until very tender, approximately 30 minutes. Save the water the carrots were steamed in. Wash, peel, and slice carrots into 1/4" rounds. Add the vegan broth to the carrot water. Place carrots along with broth in into large bowl and mash with potato masher. Mix and blend with tofu. Let cool for about 10 minutes. Puree whole mixture in a food processor.

Place soup into crockpot and sprinkle parsley on top then gently stir in. Cook in crockpot on high for two hours or low for four to six hours. One hour before finish add rice cream to reach desired consistency, lemon peel, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Broccoli Orange Salad

- 1 bunch broccoli
- 2 tbsp almonds
- 4 oranges, peeled and sliced
- 5 green onions, chopped

- 2 tbsp white vinegar
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- salt and pepper, optional

Steam broccoli flowerets in covered saucepan for 3 minutes only. Remove quickly and rinse with cold running water until broccoli is no longer warm. Do not cook further. Place in serving bowl and chill, covered.

Meanwhile, in a medium-sized bowl, combine almonds, oranges, green onions, and remaining ingredients except for salt and pepper. Toss gently and allow to stand at room temperature for about 15 to 30 minutes. When ready to serve, pour marinated orange mixture on chilled broccoli and toss very gently. Season to taste with salt and pepper, if desired, and serve.

Broccoli, Mushroom & Orange Salad

- 1/2 cup seedless golden raisins
- 1/2 cup dried, unsweetened cranberries
- 8 slices crisp-cooked bacon
- 2 oranges, peeled and sliced (save juice)
- 4 cups broccoli florets, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 cups thinly sliced, white mushrooms
- 1/2 medium onion, thinly sliced and separated into rings
- 1/2 cup unblanched sliced almonds, toasted
- 1 1/2 tbsp packed brown sugar
- 2 tsp dry mustard
- 1 tbsp fine orange zest
- 2/3 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp reserved orange juice
- sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Soak the raisins and cranberries in warm water for 15 minutes. Drain and pat dry. Place in a large bowl that has a tight fitting lid. Add the bacon, oranges, broccoli, mushrooms, and onions. Toss gently to combine, cover and refrigerate 3-4 hours. Shake/invert bowl occasionally to redistribute any juices that collect.

In a small bowl, whisk brown sugar, mustard and orange zest until evenly mixed. Add mayonnaise, orange juice, salt and pepper, and whisk until well blended. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Just prior to serving, drain any accumulated juices from the salad. Add the almonds and toss. Add just enough dressing to thoroughly moisten, tossing gently until well mixed.