



May 30, 2008

News
Editorial
Letters
Community
Sports
Entertainment
Archives

Obituaries
Classifieds
Career Ads
Cybersaver
Place An Ad
Subscribe Online
Contact Us
Privacy Policy

Featured Links

Sun Media
Quebecor Media
Bowes Publishers
Town of Pincher Creek
Chamber of Commerce

Newspaper
Advertisements

PROFESSIONAL
DIRECTORY

Garage
Sale Map

Babies of 2007

What's special about Alberta beef?

By Jocelyn Mercer
Editor
Friday May 02, 2008

What is so special about Alberta beef? It's a question Toronto based-journalist Margaret Webb found herself asking a Calgary chef while on her cross country tour of Canadian farms. She was surprised at the answer. The chef at one of the province's top steakhouses didn't appear to know. In fact after a bit of pushing he admitted he actually preferred the beef he ate as a child in Egypt.

With the majority of Alberta beef originating from the feedlot, Webb says Alberta beef isn't any different than the lion's share of other beef on the market, "wet, flavourless, tender, yes, but tasteless."

"When you come to Alberta everybody goes ra ra ra you're eating Alberta beef. It's no different than what you're eating in Toronto or Nova Scotia."

Then she discovered the River Café. One of Calgary's top restaurants, the menu features not other than Pincher Creek's Diamond Willow organic beef. Webb realized she'd found the Holy Grail of beef, the beef that Alberta had earned its reputation for.

Webb's experience in Alberta is documented in her new book Apples to Oysters. It's a diary of her journey across Canada in search of good food. On her travels she meets a flax farmer in Saskatchewan, a pork farmer from Manitoba and of course Pincher Creek's organic beef farmers.

After learning about the Diamond Willow producers, Webb gave Keith and Bev Everts a call. What followed was an invitation to stay on the couple's ranch and learn a bit more about their farming practices and why they opted to go organic.

"It was a huge gift to meet the Diamond Willow people," says Webb. "Honest to God when I think about Diamond Willow I get a bit teary eyed."

"They care so much. They want to put value into ranching so ranching can continue."

Diamond Willow's beef is different than your standard Alberta fare. While it's raised on a feedlot, the animals are given more space than their non-organic cousins, excused from a diet of growth hormones and antibiotics and fed organic hay and grain.

Webb claims a cow subjected to a traditional feedlot will produce watery beef, "the meat has no structure and is not very beefy tasting."

Comparing an organic and non organic steak side by side, there's no question as to what has the better flavour, she says. Naturally-raised beef tends to be "beefier" and "chewier, in a good way."

While the original focus of Webb's book was food, you soon learn there is more to the story. In fact every chapter in the book tends to lead towards some sort of agricultural issue.

"I didn't choose that, it just happened that way," explains Webb. "When it came to the southern foothills I didn't know about the oil and gas issues and development pressure, that's something I learned about here."

Webb says that the farmers that care about the cattle they produce also tend to care about the land they raise their herd on.

"It's not separable," she says. "You have respect for treating animals properly, you have respect for the land."

As to the cattle raised in conventional feedlots, she says the responsibility lies with the consumer and the government.

"I'm not blaming the farmers for this. The farmers have to make a living. The government's telling them to go big. Consumers are saying they want cheaper food. The farmer is merely responding to what the consumer is saying."

The experience in the southern foothills left a deep impression on Webb. She says if she was starting over again, if she was 22, she'd start a ranch out here.

"I woke up so excited to be in this landscape. I put my face in Pincher Creek and I drank out of the creek. I think the people are amazing."

"What I don't understand about Alberta is if I go to the Niagara wine region and buy a bottle of \$14 wine, I find out all about it, where it was produced, who grew the grapes. A \$45 steak in Calgary, no one knows where it came from, the ranch it comes from, it comes from Cargill. I don't understand the lack of interest in where food comes from."

"I think ranchers should want to be acknowledged for their work."



Margaret Webb visited Pincher Creek on her journey across Canada.

Submitted photo

CLASSIFIEDS

classifiedextra.ca
NEW!

20M of potential buyers!

I'm looking for

GO

See the classified
ads from all
Quebecor newspapers



Webb's hoping to educate people through her book, although her target audience isn't the farmer.

"I'm not out to educate farmers, they know what they're doing. What I'm out to do is educate the consumers. If you want good food and farmers to look after the land, this is what a steak is going to cost."

"It's not just about good food, it's about food that's good for the community, economy and environment."

Webb says she doesn't want to create a two-tier food system, where only the wealthy can afford the quality organic produce and the poor are left with the substandard.

"How many farmers want to say 'oh yeah' I raise the cheap industrial food?" she asks.

"If you're on a food budget, you can be smart about shopping. For good food buy directly from the farmer, chances are you will pay less than you would at a grocery store."

Being able to buy direct not only allows Webb to get the food she wants at a good price, it also means she can put money in the pocket of the farmer that she endorses.

"The thing I find exciting about this is it's really easy to have better agriculture in Canada and strong farmers. All we need to do is spend more money on food."

Margaret Webb's new book, Apples to Oysters, A food Lovers Tour of Canadian Farms gives an excellent insight into some of the farmers on our doorstep and further afield.

Cybersaver Newspaper Advertising
Click The Image For Full Size Display

YOUR ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONALS

Corporate Returns
Financial Statements
GST Returns • Bookkeeping
Payroll • Financial Planning

BURNHAM BUSINESS SERVICES

733 Main Street, Pincher Creek • (403) 627-4858
Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. & 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

Category: Financial Services



Publisher: Kathy Taylor
Proprietor and published
by Bowes Publishers
Limited at 714 Main Street,
PO Box 1000, Pincher
Creek, Alberta, Canada T0K
1W0

For Regional News



© 2008 Pincher Creek Echo

Visit our regional papers in Southern Alberta





May 30, 2008

- News
- Editorial
- Letters
- Community
- Sports
- Entertainment
- Archives

- Obituaries
- Classifieds
- Career Ads
- Cybersaver
- Place An Ad
- Subscribe Online
- Contact Us
- Privacy Policy

- Featured Links**
- Sun Media
 - Quebecor Media
 - Bowes Publishers
 - Town of Pincher Creek
 - Chamber of Commerce

Newspaper Advertisements

PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

Garage Sale Map

Babies of 2007



Publisher: Kathy Taylor
 Proprietor and published by Bowes Publishers
 Limited at 714 Main Street,
 PO Box 1000, Pincher Creek, Alberta, Canada T0K 1W0

Food for thought

Friday May 02, 2008

Up until recently buying organic seemed to be a bit of a bourgeois fad, but over the last couple of years more and more supermarket chains seem to be stocking organic produce and their customer base is growing. As people become more aware of the origins of the food they eat, they seem more inclined to eat organic.

In her new book Apples to Oysters, which features none other than Pincher Creek's Diamond Willow producers, Toronto-based writer Margaret Webb argues that eating organic doesn't just provide you with better tasting, more healthy food, it also contributes to a healthier environment as a whole.

She has a point. Webb says that a farmer that cares about the quality of produce he raises, whether carrots or cows, is also going to care about everything that goes into raising it. In Diamond Willow's case that's the health of the rangelands and riparian areas. So by buying directly from a producer that engages in good practices, whether organic or not, is a good way of supporting conservation efforts and rewarding the farmer directly for their work.

While supermarket organics might be priced out of reach for those on a budget, buying direct cuts out the middle man and can often mean getting quality produce at an affordable price. There really is little excuse for not doing what's right. -JM

Cybersaver Newspaper Advertising
 Click The Image For Full Size Display

HELP WANTED

- Full-time Hostess
- Full-time Servers
- Part-time Dishwasher

1315 Freebairn Ave.
Pincher Creek

Category: Careers or Employment Services

For Regional News
CALGARYSUN.COM



CLASSIFIEDS
 classifiedextra.ca
NEW!
20M of potential buyers!

I'm looking for **GO**

See the classified ads from all Quebecor newspapers



Four Winds
 Real Estate
 403-627-2727

THE VILLAGER
 REAL ESTATE CO.
 403-627-1919

Pincher Creek
Webpage
 Advertising...

PDF
 SUBSCRIPTIONS

CAREERAD
 Find a job.

Alberta Best Buys

The Weather Network Full Forecast
Pincher Creek, AB
 6°C