



Field Notes



Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

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Successful Farming 101: Learn from the Best this May

—Maura McDermott

One has been farming for six years, the other for over sixty. One grows organically; the other uses conventional growing techniques. One farms ten acres, the other about twice as much.

Two farmers, two approaches, but they have at least this much in common— both are successful, hard-working fruit/vegetable growers with a cornucopia of knowledge to share.

Visit this pair of farms—Doyle's Country Gardens and Nuyaka Natural Farm— this spring and learn from the best during the Kerr Center's Farmers' Market Field Days, Sunday May 22 and Sunday, May 29.

These field days are geared for both prospective and current farmers' market growers.

Attendees will learn about both production and marketing at these two quite different farms that sell at farmers' markets as well as through other outlets. Two different approaches, but with the same result— bountiful crops of fresh produce for Oklahoma.

These free events are just two of several field days for farmers and ranchers around the state in 2005, sponsored by the Kerr Center in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency.

Doyle's Country Gardens

Doyle's Country Gardens near Stilwell will host the May 22 event from 2-6 p.m. in the afternoon.

Burl Doyle is a retired schoolteacher and a third generation farmer of horticulture crops in Adair County, an area of Oklahoma renowned



Burl Doyle
Photo: Jennifer Lyles, Muskogee Phoenix

for fruit and vegetable production.

He currently raises five acres of vegetables, 11 acres of strawberries and six acres of blackberries and blueberries, as well as bedding plants, using conventional growing methods.

Burl and his wife Margie market their crops by wholesaling (mostly strawberries) to local produce stands, and selling from their own farm stand/store and through their booth at the Muskogee Farmers' Market.

They have been selling at the farmers' market for five years, and says Burl, "I really enjoy it."

The Doyles have one 5000 square foot greenhouse and one 1000 square foot hoop-type greenhouse where they grow about 100,000 vegetable transplants, flowers, and herbs for their own use, to sell at the farmers' market, and for sale to

Continued on page three



The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture offers progressive leadership and educational programs to all those interested in making farming and ranching environmentally friendly, socially equitable, and economically viable over the long term.

The Kerr Center is a non-profit foundation located on 4,000 acres near the south-eastern Oklahoma town of Poteau. It was established in 1985.

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Swimming in Berries: A Field Day in June

Learn how to grow delectable blueberries (and eat a few too!) on Saturday, June 11, from 9:00-3:30 at the Kerr Center's Horticulture Field Day.

The Kerr Center's current blueberry trial project began in 1998, but project director Alan Ware (aka "Blueberry King") has been growing the delicious fruits for twenty years.

This year's field day will be held at two locations— in the morning at Lavon Williams' 50-acre farm and in the afternoon at the Kerr Center Hort Farm.

This will allow participants to see Williams' new plantings, as well as see the Kerr Center's mature orchard.

Williams is a first year blueberry and blackberry grower. He will share his experiences with starting a new farm— planning, layout, plant and site selection, planting and first year weed control.

Williams has increased his knowledge of blueberry production in a short time through educational opportunities just like the one he is hosting.

Field Day participants will see several highbush, rabbiteye, and southern highbush blueberry varieties in his first planting.

The highbush varieties include *Blueray* and *Chandler*. His only rabbiteye is *Tifblue*. The southern highbush varieties include *O'Neil*, *Duke*, *Legacy*, and *Ozark Blue*.

Williams also grows blackberries and those will be available for tasting and for purchase. Lavon grows *Brazos*, *Brinson*, *Womack*, *Rosbrough*, *Kiowa*, and *Chickasaw*.

The second part of the day will take



place at the Kerr Center Horticulture Farm. Three varieties are being evaluated at the Kerr Center's farm: *Ozarkblue*, *Summit*, and *Blueray*.

Kerr Center staff will cover yield data, weed control, irrigation, and fertility management for a mature orchard.

Picnic tables will be available for participants to bring lunch.

The Kerr Center will serve blueberry cobbler and ice cream for dessert. Blueberries will be available for purchase after the field day.

The field day is free and will be held rain or shine. No pre-registration is required. So, bring your lunch and join us for a blueberry-filled day!

Directions: Register at the Horticulture Farm beginning at 9 a.m. **(Group will gather at the Hort Farm and leave for Williams' farm at 9:30.)**

The Horticulture Farm is located on highway 271 five miles southwest of Poteau/highway 59 junction or two miles north of Wister on Hwy 271. Watch for Field day signs.

This event is supported by the USDA Risk Management Agency.

Continued from page one...

other growers.

Field Day attendees will be given a tour of the farm, and Doyle says he will encourage everyone to ask plenty of questions. Participants will also learn how to select equipment for small to mid-sized operations, as well as learn about planting for a continuous harvest and diversifying a farm with nursery production.

Doyle, whose family has grown as much as 120 acres of strawberries, will also share the secrets of successfully growing the legendary and delicious Stilwell strawberry.



Nuyaka Natural Farms

In their sixth year of organic vegetable farming, James and Jennifer Cooper live and work on 80 acres southwest of Tulsa. They will host the second farm market field day on Sunday, May 29, from 2-6.

Cultivating approximately eight acres of veggies and two acres of cut flowers, they start every plant from seed. The Coopers use organic growing methods and are applying for certification this year.

They offer almost thirty different vegetables, fruits and herbs—everything from salad mix to melons to tomatoes—to customers from May through October.

“It’s a lot of labor and a lot of love,” says Cooper, “but I couldn’t see

Special events like the Muskogee Farmers’ market annual salsa tasting contest, help bring in crowds

myself doing anything else.”

Their main sales outlets are the Tulsa-Cherry St. Farmers Market, a 50-member CSA and three Tulsa-area restaurants. They have a new 30 by 96 foot hoop house/ cold frame for fall/winter CSA production.

At the field day, James will demonstrate bed-shaping, transplanting and cultivating (as conditions allow) and talk about row-crops such as green beans, Endamame soybeans and purple hull peas for fresh market sales.

Other topics to be discussed: drip irrigation from ponds, using a 10’ x 15’ “cool room” or “high cooler,” and for those just starting out—financing the farm.

Come On Out

Field day organizers are hoping that people will go to both field days in order to get a more complete picture of what is possible on a small to mid-sized produce farm.

“I hope we can interest a few young people to get into horticulture,” says Burl Doyle. “So many kids think you have to have a million dollars to do it.” but he disputes that. “You can start on a shoe string and build up.”

For more information on the field days, contact the Kerr Center at 918.647.9123. For more information on the Cooper’s CSA visit www.kerrcenter.com or call 918.752.0628.

You can buy fresh produce from Burl Doyle at the Muskogee Farmers’ Market on Saturdays through October at 801 W. Okmulgee (behind the library) or at his on-farm store, Mon.-Sat. from 10-4.



Directions to Nuyaka Natural Farm

Take state hwy. 16 to Edna Rd (193rd) – approx. 8 miles west of downtown Beggs or approx. 4.5 miles east of Slick. Go south on Edna Rd. 5 miles to end. Turn east (left) and follow road one mile to the curve. Farm is on the right, approx. 1/4 mile past curve.

Directions to Doyle’s Country Gardens

The farm is located on state hwy. 59, three miles north of Stilwell. Look for a big curve in the road and “Doyle’s Country Gardens” painted on the end of a metal building. Coming from the south, the farm is on the left side of the road.



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JOHN IKERD'S Common Sense

—Maura McDermott

On paper, John Ikerd is a highly successful man: he has a BA, a MA, and a PhD in Agricultural Economics; he worked for Wilson Foods in two cities; he was a professor at several universities, including Oklahoma State and the University of Georgia; and finally, was named Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri.

But he would tell you that for many years now he has not measured his success by titles conferred or grants received. Ikerd is a man with a mission: to talk to people about a new vision for society, a vision based on what he calls “common sense.”

Ikerd’s common sense is not conventional wisdom, not something learned, but, as he puts it, “something we know—instinctively, intuitively—an innate sense of truth and fallacy, right and wrong, good and bad, that comes to somewhere within us, from somewhere beyond us.” It is something we all share in common.

This kind of common sense compels us, he says, to care for others and to care about nature. Applying this common sense to agriculture, the natural environment, and society, will help bring about a better world.

These days Ikerd’s sense of accomplishment is tied to how well he can convey to others his positive vision for the future. He is spending much of his retirement speaking to people across the country that he believes are becoming more and more receptive to his message.

He also has been writing. He has 129 short papers on his website. Each paper sets forth its argument with clarity and conviction. They are easy to read and infectious in their optimism.

Subjects run the gamut from the philosophical to the practical.

He also has completed two books. One of these, *Sustainable Capitalism: A Matter of Common Sense*, is forthcoming in August from Kumarian Press (see sidebar).

His other book, his magnum opus, *The Case for Common Sense: The New Economic, Ecological and Social Revolution*, is online at his website.

In *The Case for Common Sense*, Ikerd tells the story of his own transformation—from a conservative, bottom-line, free market economist to an advocate for an “economics of sustainability.”



John Ikerd (left) has had a long association with the Kerr Center, and served as a trustee for the last three years. In December Kerr Center president Jim Horne presented him with a plaque for his service. Another outgoing trustee, Dan Nagengast, was also honored.

He weaves together the personal and the professional, revealing how his addiction to work and control, and lack of balance and harmony in his life, contributed to the destruction of his health and marriage.

He makes the case that his personal experience is emblematic of the narrow “industrial mindset” pervasive in American society (and in conventional agriculture) that he says “values money and efficiency above personal relationships and the natural environment.”

Ikerd’s social conscience began to awaken when he was head of Extension Agricultural Economics at the University of Georgia in the mid to late 1980s. “We were not developing ag

programs that would do the most for the public good,” he recalls.

He came to this realization as he worked all day long, face to face with farm families, helping them with budgets.

“It hit me that what we had been teaching wasn’t working and wasn’t going to work for many farmers,” he asserts.

Focusing on the short term, he says, and a narrow bottom line forced farms to get bigger and bigger. The result: “We had to face a large number of farmers going out of business.”

“This was not what I had set out to do,” he says. “My priority was to help people succeed. Furthermore, we were not helping farmers develop a land stewardship ethic, protect water quality or maintain rural communities.

“We were making agriculture more efficient, but we weren’t helping people.”

Ikerd began to be interested in an agriculture that “would enhance the overall quality of life of people.” This led him directly to the sustainable agriculture movement.

He returned to the University of Missouri, where he had been educated, to work with the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program and to coordinate the university’s sustainable agriculture Extension programs.

From this experience he came to believe that Extension programs need to “embrace a greater diversity of thought,” than they have in the past.

He says Extension should return to its roots as a people organization with a focus on families and talk about “a legitimate land ethic,” whereby ecological concerns are integrated with economics.

What does he see down the road? He sees a new “vertical coalition” forming—between family/sustainable farms, independent food processors and retailers, consumers, and those concerned about health and nutrition.

He counsels those impatient for change to remember that change happens one person at a time. As he discovered, “change has to



John Ikerd is greeted by Kerr Center founder Kay Kerr Adair at the *Future Farms 2000* conference.

come first in a person’s mind—a person has to say, ‘I want to do something different and give it my best.’ ”

Success, he says, will then depend upon “an individual’s creativity and imagination.”

By that common sense measure, John Ikerd can truly be considered a success.



“If capitalism is to be sustainable, social and ethical values must be reintegrated into economics, thus... ensuring that society truly benefits from economic development, both within and across generations.”

So argues John Ikerd in his upcoming book *Sustainable Capitalism: A Matter of Common Sense*. For more information contact Kumarian Press, www.kpbooks.com.

John Ikerd’s online papers are organized under nine headings:

- Sustaining People through Agriculture
- Small Farms
- The New American Farm
- Sustainable Agriculture
- The Future of Farming in America
- Farming and the Environment
- Sustainable Community Development
- The Economics of Sustainability
- The Industrialization of Agriculture

Eight papers are available in Spanish.

www.ssu.missouri.edu/faculty/jikerd/



The New American Food Culture

—John Ikerd, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics, University of Missouri

...the new food ethic cannot be defined simply as an aversion to agricultural chemicals or genetic engineering. The new American food ethic reflects a desire to build relationships with farmers, and through farmers, with the earth.

“Eating is a moral act,” as my friend Brother David Andrews, a fellow promoter of sustainable agriculture, is fond of saying. Although we may not give it much thought, what we choose to eat is a reflection of our basic values and beliefs.

Eating makes a social statement – we eat with our family and our friends. Eating makes a political statement – what we eat affects what other people will and won’t have to eat. Eating makes a moral statement – what we eat affects how the earth is treated, and thus, reflects our personal ethics. Whether we think about it or not, eating is a reflection of character.

For the most part, Americans want their food to be quick, convenient, and cheap – regardless of whether they buy it at a supermarket or a local fast-food franchise. Americans like things that are fast and easy, requiring minimal personal or economic sacrifice.

Americans also value “looking good” and choose foods that “look good.” Some are even willing to spend a lot of money for food that makes them “look good” – as when they eat in expensive restaurants. The characteristics of America’s dominant food culture are cost, convenience, and appearance.

However, a new American food ethic is emerging to challenge these dominant values. The rapid growth in demand for organic foods, averaging more than 20 percent per year for more than a decade, is but one among several indicators of a new food ethic.

Organic foods were neither cheaper nor more attractive than conventional food, nor were they more convenient to acquire. The early organic consumers were more likely to be labeled “counter-cultural” than as “trend setters.” Those who chose organic foods obviously were expressing a different food ethic.

Farmers markets, community supported agriculture organizations (CSAs), and other means of

direct food marketing have experienced growth rates similar to those for organic foods.

So, the new food ethic cannot be defined simply as an aversion to agricultural chemicals or genetic engineering. The new American food ethic reflects a desire to build relationships with farmers, and through farmers, with the earth.

Certainly, some organic consumers are concerned mainly, if not exclusively, with their own physical well-being. But, many others buy organic foods because the philosophical roots of organics are in stewardship and community, in caring for the earth and its people. Most who buy food at farmers markets, CSAs, etc., seek out farmers who share this new and different American food ethic, regardless of whether their products are certified as organic.

The new food culture might seem insignificant, if we look only at sales of “alternative food products” – including, organic, natural, pesticide free, hormone and antibiotic free, free range, grass-fed, etc. Sales of such products probably amount to less than one percent of total food sales – not including foods labeled natural, light, healthy, etc., that are no different in substance from conventional foods.

But, a growing number of Americans are expressing doubts and outright dissatisfaction with the current American food system. And, their dissatisfaction is not with cost, convenience, or appearance. They simply don’t trust the corporate food manufacturers and distributors, or the government, to ensure the safety and nutritional value of their food. And they certainly don’t trust the corporations or government to promote stewardship of land and or the well-being of ordinary people.

These Americans are searching for foods that will reflect a different set of ethical values – not just in the food itself, but also in how their food is produced and who benefits and suffers as a consequence of its production.

This new food culture is but one dimension of a whole new American culture. In their new book, *The Cultural Creatives*, Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson provide compelling evidence that some fifty million Americans are now leading the way in creating this new American culture.

The authors identify three distinct groups within American society, based on some 100,000 responses to surveys concerning basic values and lifestyles, supplemented by numerous focus groups and personal interviews.

One group, identified as the “cultural creatives,” is growing rapidly, and while although still a minority, already makes up roughly one-quarter of the American adult population.

The dominant group, the “moderns,” makes up about half of American society. However, only about half of this group is firmly committed to the dominant American culture of materialistic, economic self-interest. About a quarter of those in the “moderns” group are too busy trying to get ahead or to make ends meet to think about what they believe. Those in the remaining quarter actually feel alienated by modern society, it isn’t working for them, but they go along because they don’t see a viable alternative.

The final group, the “traditionalists,” makes up about a quarter of the adult population. The authors describe the traditionalists as wanting the world to be “like it used to be but never was.”

The “core moderns,” although no larger in number than the “cultural creatives,” tend to define American culture because they are disproportionately in positions of economic and political power.

The values of the “moderns” are reflected in our apparent national obsession with material success – making money, getting ahead, looking good, and living an affluent lifestyle. The “moderns” care about family, community, and have some concern for the natural environment, but they care far more about their



John Ikerd was interviewed by Ron Hayes for the Oklahoma Agrinet in 2000.

individual material success.

In contrast, the “traditionalists” have strong religious beliefs and hold traditional family values, but they are less concerned about the natural environment than either of the other groups.

The “cultural creatives” are distinguished from the other two by their strong beliefs in the value of personal relationships, within families, communities, and society as a whole, and by their concern for the integrity and sustainability of the natural environment.

The sustainable agriculture movement is a small but critical part of the much larger movement that is creating a new American culture.

They are associated with various movements, including social justice, environmental protection, civil rights, gender rights, and sustainable development. They are less materialistic than either of the other groups and tend to be more spiritual – in the sense of believing in something higher, beyond self.

The values and lifestyles of the “cultural creatives” are completely consistent with the principles of “sustain-

able development” and “sustainable agriculture.” They believe that quality of life results from equitably meeting the needs of the present while leaving equal or better opportunities for the future.

The sustainability movement arose from a growing realization that economic development alone does not increase overall quality of life, but instead, often leads to its degradation. To be sustainable over time, development activities must be ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible. But equally important, balance and harmony among the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of life must result in a higher quality of life.

Thankfully, the ranks of the “cultural creatives” include thousands of new American farmers. These “cultural creating” farmers may call themselves organic, biodynamic, alternative, holistic, natural, ecological, practical, or nothing at all; however, they all fit under the “conceptual umbrella” of sustainable agriculture.

The sustainable agriculture movement is a small but critical part of the much larger movement that is creating a new American culture.

The sustainable agriculture movement emerged in response to growing concerns about the sustainability of our corporate-controlled, industrial food

system. Independent food processors, distributors, and marketers now face the same kinds of challenges, and thus, have the same kinds of opportunities as independent family farmers.

Independent food marketers cannot expect to compete with the giant “global food chain clusters” of today – they have too little market power. If there is to be a future for independent food processors, distributors, or marketers, they must join with sustainable farmers, working and living by a new code of ethics to meet the needs of the new American culture.

The Hartman Report – a respected survey of United States households – identified two consumer groups, the “true naturals” and “new green mainstream,” which already make up about twenty-eight percent of the population, as prime markets for sustainably produced foods. These groups are very similar in attitudes and magnitude to Ray and Anderson’s “cultural creatives.”

Organizations such as the Chefs

Collaborative, made up of chefs from up-scale restaurants throughout the country, are helping to create this new culture. Their organizational principles include: “Sound food choices emphasizing locally grown, seasonally fresh, and whole or minimally processed ingredients.” Their other principles are very much in harmony with the development and support of an ecologically sound and socially responsible food system.

The Slow Food movement is a worldwide organization of “food eaters.” It is committed to promoting the diversity of local and regional quality food, produced and marketed in ways that guarantees farmers a fair price and protects the environment and the natural landscape.

Those in the Slow Food movement have a clear understanding of the industrial food system and they realize that a return to local and regional food systems will be necessary for ecological and social sustainability. Slow Food is not an elitist gourmet movement, but instead, encourages “good, honest food at reason-

able prices” and its appreciation and enjoyment to the fullest by all.

The “cultural creatives” didn’t exist forty years ago and perhaps accounted for five to ten percent of Americans a decade ago; today they account for a quarter or more of the total population, and they are still growing. Farmers today are serving less than five percent of this “new American food market.” Slowly but surely, a new American food system is being developed by a coalition of sustainable farmers, marketers, and like-minded eaters. Together, these farmers, marketers, and citizen eaters are creating the new American food culture.

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For the past 100 years Oklahoma has offered farmers and ranchers a rich land on which to grow an abundance of food—everything from prize beef to waving wheat.

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Local Food 'Greener than Organic'

Local food is usually more “green” than organic food, according to a report published in the journal *Food Policy*.

The authors say organic farming is also valuable, but people can help the environment even more by buying food from within a 20km (12-mile) radius. They calculate that moving food long distances can cause more harm than non-organic farming methods.

Furthermore, “road miles” account for proportionately more environmental damage than “air miles,” they claim.

Therefore, the researchers’ message to consumers is this: it is not good enough to buy food from within the UK - it is better if it comes from within your area, too.

However, they admit that consumers are prevented from “doing the right thing” because of inadequate labeling.

“The most political act we do on a daily basis is to eat, as our actions affect farms, landscapes and food businesses,” said co-author Professor Jules Pretty, from the University of Essex, UK.

“Food miles are more significant than we previously thought, and much now needs to be done to encourage local production and consumption of food.”

Clean-up costs

Professor Pretty and his colleague Tim Lang, from City University, UK, painstakingly estimated the environmental price tag on each stage of the food production process.

That price might reflect, for example, the clean-up costs following pollution, or the loss of profits caused by

erosion damage.

“The price of food is disguising externalised costs - damage to the environment, damage to climate, damage to infrastructure and the cost of transporting food on roads,” Professor Lang told the BBC News website.

The authors calculated that if all foods were sourced from within 20km of where they were consumed, environmental and congestion costs would fall from more than £2.3bn to under £230m an “environmental saving” of £2.1bn annually.



They pointed out that organic methods can also make an important contribution. If all farms in the UK were to turn organic, then the country would save £1.1bn of environmental costs each year.

Consumers can save a further £100m in environmental costs, the authors claim, if they cycle, walk or catch the bus to the shops rather than drive.

Each week, the average person clocks up 93p worth of environmental costs, the report concludes.

These costs should be addressed by the government, companies and consumers, the authors believe.

Sophisticated policy

“It is going to need some sophisticated policy solutions,” Professor Pretty

said. “You could say we should internalise those costs in prices, so that it affects people’s behavior. That might be economically efficient but it lacks on the social justice side because it will affect rich people much less.”

Instead, the authors are advocating a softer approach. Consumers should make ethical choices about the food that they buy, and supermarkets should be open with customers about where their food is coming from.

At the moment, as every UK consumer will know, it is impossible to tell whether your carrot has come from Devon or Scotland.

“In the short term, our paper adds to consumer frustration,” Professor Lang concedes. “The problem is we don’t get the information. Food labels don’t tell you the sort of information you really need to know if you want to do the right thing by the environment.”

Since supermarkets do know exactly where their food is coming from, Professor Lang believes they have a duty to inform their customers.

Eventually, the authors hope, the food production infrastructure within Britain will be transformed.

“We think farming methods will change - farming will undergo a rebirth, if you like,” said Professor Lang.

“A big city like London could be provided with a lot more seasonal vegetables from local farms - because at the moment, the shape of the supply chain is all wrong from the point of view of food, environment and public health.”

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/4312591.stm>

Published: 2005/03/02 © BBC MMV



From Beta-carotene to Omega-3s: The ABCs of Health and Nutrition in Grassfed Meats

—Wylie Harris

When talk turns to community food security, foods from grassfed livestock come up early and often. Many consumers search out grassfed products to help keep their local ecologies and economies healthy.

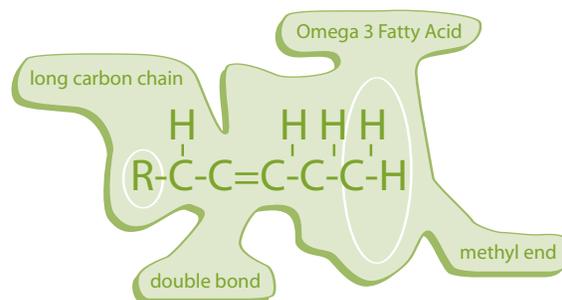
But most are interested for the sake of their own personal health as well, and they face a bewildering variety of conflicting claims about the health effects of meat, dairy, and eggs from grassfed livestock.

Much of the confusion stems from differences in the desired standard of proof. For some people, it's enough to know that foods from grassfed livestock contain higher levels of substances associated in some general way with increased health.

Others want to see such beneficial health effects scientifically demonstrated in animals whose biology is similar to that of people – which is why laboratory rats can find jobs. Still others withhold belief until medical research documents those effects in human beings.

The state of scientific knowledge about the health benefits of grassfed food products is more advanced for some claims than others. For instance, there is now widespread agreement that the meat from just about any ruminant will be leaner if the animal was raised on grass. Grassfed beef's lower fat content alone is enough to make devoted customers of many health-conscious eaters (a 4 oz. typical serving: 7-10 grams saturated fat, compared to 14-16 grams for corn-fed). At the same time, though, a growing aversion to fat has pushed others away from meat of any kind.

Ironically, a growing body of scientific evidence suggests that grass-fed meat not only has less fat overall; it also has more of the kinds of fat that have, or may have, beneficial health effects.



From Maryland Sea Grant School Online News

Omega-3s

The most solidly documented of those effects are those associated with omega-3s. “Omega-3” is shorthand for “omega-3 fatty acid,” meaning that the molecule is unsaturated, with a double bond at the third carbon atom from the omega end.

Both omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids occur naturally in human diets, with the omega-6 form predominating.

The relative amount of omega-3 fatty acids in beef is higher in pasture finished animals than in those fed grain only.

A relatively high intake of omega-3 relative to omega-6 fatty acids increases HDL (the so-called “good” cholesterol) and reduces blood cholesterol levels, as well as reducing the incidence of cardiovascular disorders such as heart arrhythmia and atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).

Increasing the amount of omega-3 relative to omega-6 fatty acids in rats’ diets has also been shown to inhibit the formation of breast cancers.

Omega-3s are also important building blocks of brain tissue, and a higher dietary intake of them has been linked to decreased risk for a variety of mental illnesses ranging from depression to Alzheimer’s.



Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA)

Linoleic acid, another kind of unsaturated fatty acid, occurs naturally in beef and dairy products. It's one of two essential fatty acids – those necessary for human metabolism, but not produced by the human body itself.

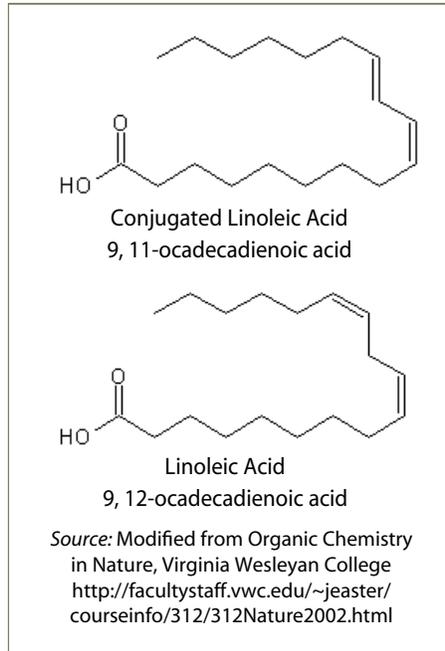
During digestion, bacteria in the rumen rearrange the two double bonds in the linoleic acid molecule, putting them on adjacent carbon atoms to form what's known as "conjugated linoleic acid," or CLA.

The bacteria responsible for CLA formation thrive in relatively less acidic conditions. But a diet of grain makes the rumen more acidic, reducing the abundance of these bacteria, and thus the amount of CLAs produced in the animal's digestive process.

Pasture-finished cattle can have 2 to 6 times more CLAs in their meat, and five times as much in their milk than those fed silage and/or grain. CLAs are resistant to processing and cooking, as well as the human digestive process, so that the more CLA-rich foods you eat, the more CLAs you'll have in your body.

Once in your body, linoleic acid and CLAs have strikingly different effects for two molecules whose chemical structures are so similar. Linoleic acid has been associated with increased risks of obesity, diabetes, and tumor growth.

CLAs, on the other hand, have been shown to decrease all of these risks in laboratory animals. Moreover, CLAs also lower the likelihood of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), thereby



lessening the risk of heart disease. These effects are thought to be due to CLAs' anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant actions.

CLAs also inhibited the growth of human cancer cells in laboratory cultures in one study, while another showed that women eating diets of grass-fed meat and dairy foods had a 60% lower risk of breast cancer than those eating the grain-fed equivalents.

Among natural anti-cancer agents, CLAs are unusual for a couple of reasons: they come from animal-derived foods rather than plant-derived, and the amount eaten in a normal dietary intake of those foods constitutes an effective dose.

Vitamins

Healthier fats aren't the only nutritional cards that grassfed foods can play. They also have elevated levels of other

health-promoting substances – sort of like a vitamin capsule in a steak.

Beef from pasture-finished cattle has been found to contain three times more vitamin E than the meat from cattle fed a conventional grain ration.

The characteristic yellow color of fat from grassfed meat comes from the fact that it contains more beta-carotene than meat from grain-fed animals.

Beta-carotene, a precursor of Vitamin A, is also what gives carrots their orange color (and their reputation for preserving eyesight).

The feedlot system grew out of pressure to produce large amounts of meat as quickly as possible. Ironically, that system's success at generating huge quantities of beef, dairy, and eggs has robbed those products of some essential nutrients.

For example, one researcher estimates that over the past 50 years, the switch to feedlot based livestock production, combined with declining per capita meat consumption, has decreased the amount of CLA in North American diets by two-thirds.

As the evidence increasingly shows, certain essential nutrients – and the health benefits that accompany them – can be restored to livestock-based food products simply by putting the livestock back where they started: on grass.

Additional websites with information on nutritional aspects of grassfed livestock

- www.usu.edu/trd/hiiman/homepage.html
- www.wisc.edu/fri/clarefs.htm
- www.eatwild.com

Green Grass and Murray Greys: Beaver Creek Farms' Direct

—Wylie Harris



It's a gray March day on Beaver Creek Farms outside Lawton – blustery, cold, threatening rain – and the cattle, a breed called Murray Grey, are colored to blend in. But ranch owner-operators Carole Brown and Tom Gunn see, in the green grass everywhere underfoot, the color of the stuff they'll use to measure another successful season of direct-marketing their grassfed Oklahoma beef.

“The market doesn't really affect the price we're getting for our beef,” says Gunn. “Cattle prices are high now. Our premium is still higher, but not as much. But a year from now, the direct marketing price will still be high – the other prices, maybe not.”

Although – or perhaps because – their eyes never stray far from the bottom line, Brown and Gunn use an approach that considers the health of all parts of the system: soil, water, plants, animals – and customers.

“A lot of the people who buy our beef buy it for the health reasons of grassfed,” says Gunn. “We get a lot of interest through grassfed, and a lot through antibiotic- and hormone-free.”

Not long after they entered the cattle business in 1994-5, Gunn says, “We realized we'd get a better premium by going a different route. We compared the price we were getting for cattle and then the price of steak in the grocery store. There was no relationship.”

Gunn and Brown eased into the direct marketing game a few animals at a time. According to Brown, it took three to four years to build up a stable customer base.

Early on, she says, “We gave away a lot of free one-pound packs of hamburger, because that's the easiest thing for people to tell the difference between ours and what they get in the store.”

The marketing efforts paid off. “We've never had a complaint about the beef,” says Brown. Today, if you want to buy Beaver Creek's grassfed beef, there's a place on the waiting list for you.

Even so, says Brown, “We try not to take anything to the

butcher unless it's already sold.”

Beaver Creek takes a small deposit in July and August – “just a commitment,” as Brown puts it – for an animal that will be slaughtered the following January. “We'd sell a lot more than we do,” she allows, “but people don't realize that they have to plan ahead.”

Over the years, Beaver Creek's customers have adjusted to that planning process. Brown and Gunn have shifted to meet their clients' needs, too – for example, by moving their sale date closer to the time of year when people are getting tax refunds.

Brown and Gunn have tried several different processors over the years, finally settling on a small USDA inspected plant 60 miles away.

“We've found that it's worth the drive,” says Gunn, citing the importance for direct marketers of locating a capable, trustworthy processor.

Beaver Creek's customers are usually local, from Oklahoma City and Norman, with some from Tulsa. When their orders are ready, they pick them up at the processor themselves.

Selling by the quarter or the half, Beaver Creek needs no permits beyond the inspection sticker from the processing plant. Says Gunn, “If you can sell it local, why bother to ship?”

Like its marketing strategy, Beaver Creek's signature breed is the result of a gradual conversion sparked by an early realization.

Brown and Gunn began with Limousin bulls in a mixed herd of cattle. Their interest in Murray Greys, an Australian breed currently celebrating its hundredth year of existence, grew out of

an article the two saw in the *Stockman-Grassfarmer* magazine.

The article described Murray Greys as gentle, beefy, suited to all climates, with small, lively calves – and polled. “We really hated any kind of dehorning,” Gunn says.

He and Brown visited a herd of Murray Greys in Kansas, and, “We found it all to be true.”

“There are studies on different breeds and how they do finishing out on grass,” says Gunn. “Murray Greys do extremely well.”

So well, in fact, that the organizers of *GrazeFest Alabama* invited Beaver Creek to bring its animals for a display of different breeds at an event in Alabama last fall. The interest they drew helps explain why sales of breeding bulls make up a fast-growing share of Beaver Creek’s income.

“The number one criterion for bulls is tenderness—” Gunn says— “not how many pounds a day they’re going to gain.”

They have tail hair or semen tested for genetic markers of tenderness, with many of their bulls registering perfect scores.

That’s not to say that gain isn’t important, or that Beaver Creek hasn’t worked out its grass feeding routine to address it. Their calves gain 2.5 to 3 pounds a day on cool season grasses, Gunn says, while they shoot for 1 to 1.5 pounds a day during the summer.

How do they sustain that rate of gain on forage? “We’re not intensive grazing,” says Gunn. “We don’t move ‘em every day. That’s why we don’t overstock, and there’s always forage for them to go to. It takes more land to do it like we’re doing. But we can’t feed them corn – that’s just not the way we do things.”



Carole Brown shows off one of her Murray Greys

Beaver Creek’s forage isn’t the only aspect of production that’s pampered. “Cattle have feelings. They really do,” Gunn explains. “We don’t use hotshots, or run ‘em with dogs or four-wheelers. We try to keep their stress as low as possible.”

Nor do Brown and Gunn overlook the “feelings” of soil and water. In 1998, Beaver Creek received an Oklahoma Producer Grant from the Kerr Center, which they used to plant buffer strips around, and fence livestock out of, a perpetually muddy pond draining several hundred acres of continuously cultivated land. As a result, over the years, the water in the pond has cleared up.

Even with such a successful record, Brown and Gunn are slow to claim credit. “We only have ten years’ experience,” says Gunn. “What we don’t know is amazing.” Still, it’s plain that they’ve found a niche in more than just the marketing sense when he says, “We will never give up the beef business.”



If you are interested in producing and marketing grass-fed beef, you probably have many questions and are wondering where you can find some answers. Try the Washington State University website, <http://csanr.wsu.edu/AgEnvironment/grassFedBeef.htm> to find resources that will help you answer most of your questions. Also you can contact them by phone: 253.445.4626 or by mail: CSANR, Washington State University, 7612 Pioneer Way, Puyallup, WA 98371-4998

▶ **Beaver Creek Farms’ Website**
www.murraygrey.com

▶ **Murray Grey International Association Website**
www.murraygrey.org/

To find other Oklahoma producers raising grass-fed/finished beef go to:

▶ www.kerrcenter.com/ofp and check out *The Oklahoma Food Connection: A Directory of Agricultural Producer, Crops, and Institutional Buyers*

▶ www.eatwild.com and click on Oklahoma.

▶ **Oklahoma Food Cooperative:**
www.oklahomafood.coop.org

▶ Check with your **county Extension agent** for producers in your area



Welcome to

Oklahoma Farmers' Markets!

Are you looking for a wide array of fresh fruits and vegetables in a friendly atmosphere? Do you want to get to know a farmer and be sure you are getting wholesome, delicious, high quality produce?

Would you like to support your community's economy by supporting local agriculture?

Are you concerned about the environment and interested in preserving land farmed in a sustainable way?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then shopping at an Oklahoma farmers' market is for you.

This is an exciting time for Oklahoma farmers' markets. New markets are opening each year and existing markets continue to expand their season

and products.

In 2005, 29 markets (meeting all licensure requirements required by the Oklahoma Department of Health) were registered with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Of those registered markets, 24 offer 100% "Oklahoma Grown" fresh products. (Markets on the list with * are Oklahoma Grown Markets).

This season, check out a farmers' market near you!



***Bartlesville Heart of Town Market**

217 SE Adams Blvd. Ste. 3
Ann-Janette Webster
918-336-9100
ajpioneer@cs.com
Summer hours: June 12-July 24
Saturday: 8 a.m. - Noon
Fall hours: Oct. 2 - Oct. 23
Saturday: 9 a.m. - Noon

***Bethany Farmers' Market**

6800 NW 39th Expressway
Heather Walter
405-789-6711
hwalter@thechildrens-center.org
Thursday: 4 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Saturday: 8 a.m.-1 p.m.
May through September



***Choctaw Farmers' Market**

2001 North Harper
Bernie Nauheimer
405-390-8276
choctawn@netscape.net
Wednesday: 8 a.m. - Noon
Saturday: 8 a.m. - Noon
June through October

***Collinsville Tri-County Farmers' Market**

10th and Center
Melinda Marsh
918-371-4480
Monday: 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Wednesday: 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
May through October

***Cushing Farmers' Market**

104 W. Broadway
Rick Reily
918-225-7985
cushms@sbcglobal.net
Thursday: 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
June through September

Edmond Farmers' Market

2nd & Broadway
Mike Clark
405-359-4629
Wednesday: 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Saturday: 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
May through October

***El Reno Farmers' Market**

Downtown West of
Ross Seed & Feed
Codie Finnigan
405-262-6870
mainstreet@elreno.org
Saturday and Wednesday
8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
June through September

***Elk City Farmers' Market**

Madison & Broadway
Darrell Wootton
580-393-4449
Tuesday: 4:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Saturday: 7:30 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.
July through October

***Enid Farmers' Market**

Enid Fairgrounds
Tuesday: 8 a.m. - Noon
Thursday: 8 a.m. - Noon
Saturday: 8 a.m. - Noon
June through October

***Grove Farmers' Market**

Broadway Street and West 3rd St
Hwy 59
Saturday: 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.
June through October

***Hobart Farmers' Market**

Kiowa County Courthouse Square
Stephen Boyd - 580-726-4206
hobartmainstreet@itlnet.net
Saturday: 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.
June through August

Jenks Farmers' Market

3rd & Main Street
Nancy Johnson - 918-322-3374
info@jenkschamber.com
Saturday: 7 a.m. - Noon
May through September

***Muskogee Farmers' Market**

801 W. Okmulgee
Susie Lawrence - 918-487-5474
sandcreekfarm@mynewroads.com
Wednesday and Saturday:
8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April through October

Norman Farmers' Market

615 E. Robinson
Wanda Danley - 405-360-4721
ccfb@sbcglobal.net
Wednesday and Saturday:
8 a.m. - Noon
April through October

***North Tulsa Farmers' Market**

2620 E. 56 St N
Demalda Newsome
918-955-8559
newfars777@aol.com
Saturday: 8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
June through October

***OSU-OKC Farmers' Market**

400 N. Portland, Oklahoma City
Elaine Coleman
405-945-3358
elaindc@osuokc.net
Wednesday: 10 a.m.- 1 p.m.
Wednesday 4 p.m.- 7 p.m.
April through November
Saturday: 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Saturday Open Year Round

Perry Green Farmers' Market

1500 W. Fir
Mike Green - 580-336-2071
mgreen@perry.sp.net
Saturday: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
May through October

***Piedmont Farmers' Market**

1st and Monroe Street
Saturday: 8 a.m. - Noon
June through September

***Pittsburg County Farmers' Market**

3 South Main Street, McAlester
Pat Cotton - 423-8796
evicks@okstate.edu
Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday:
Open at 7 a.m.
May through October

***Shawnee Farmers' Market**

Bell & 7th Street
Theresa Cody - 405-273-7985
Wednesday and Saturday:
8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
May through October

***Stigler Haskell County Farmers' Market**

104 Northeast 6th Street
918-967-8681
Monday, Wednesday,
Friday & Saturday: 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.
June through August

***Stillwater Farmers' Market**

309 North Main Street
Chris Stiegler - 405-747-8320
jstiegl@okstate.edu
Wednesday and Saturday :
8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
April through October

***Tulsa Cherry Street Farmers' Market**

15th and Peoria
Kim Smith - 918-749-2748
krs578083@cox.net
Saturdays at Cherry Street (15th)
April until second weekend of October
7:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
Wednesdays at Tulsa Garden Center
2435 South Peoria Ave
May through September
4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Valliant Farmers' Market

Hwy 70 W. @ RR Track
Sharon Bain - 580-933-5050
valcham@valliant.net
Monday and Saturday:
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
June through August

***Vinita Farmers' Market**

I-44 & Historic Route 66
Marsha Butler - 918-256-5411
wine@summersidevineyards.com
Wednesday and Saturday
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
June through October

***Wilburton Farmers' Market**

300 W. Main
Rick Manley
918-465-5518
rick@cwis.net
Saturday: 8 a.m.-11 a.m.
June through September

***Wilson Farmers' Market**

Wilson Central Park Hwy 76
Saturday: 7:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
June through August

***Woodward Main Street**

9th & Texas
Kathryn Urchurch
580-254-8521
woodwardms@cityofwoodward.com
Tuesday 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
July through August
Saturday: 8 a.m. - Noon
June through October

***Yukon Farmers' Market**

Mid Okla. Coop
Main Street Hwy 66
Melinda Rushing
405-354-4216
mrushing@midokcoop.com
Saturday 8 a.m. - Noon
May through October



CALENDAR

Summer Workshops

**TOMATO FIELD DAY, JUNE 23,
6 - 8:30 P.M., MCALESTER**

This field day will take place at three different locations and the focus will be on growing market tomatoes, and pest and weed management. No advance registration is required.

**KERR CENTER GRAZING WORKSHOP, AUGUST 11-13
KERR CENTER, POTEAU**

Learn how to better utilize your pasture forage and protect your land. Three experienced teachers, Kim Barker, Walt Davis, and Charles Griffith, will teach the workshop. For more information on these and other events, check upcoming *Field Notes*, www.kerrcenter.com or call 918.647.9123.

**TURKEY FIELD DAY, AUGUST 18,
6 - 9 P.M., MIKE WALTERS FARM, STILWELL**

Walters is nationally known for his Heritage turkeys. He will share his experiences with all aspects of raising turkeys. Pre-registration is required; participants are limited to 30.



**WINE GRAPE FIELD DAY
JULY 23, STILLWATER**

The Woodland Park Vineyard, owned by Ivol and Jeanette Hane, will host a field day on wine grape production and wine making.

**OKLAHOMA LAND STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE
ANNUAL CONFERENCE - AUGUST 5-6, 2005,**

Langston University, Oklahoma City campus
Keynote speaker: Allan Savory, of Savory Center in New Mexico (www.holisticmanagement.org/) Registration is \$100, includes meals. More information will be available later at www.kerrcenter.com and summer *Field Notes*.

**CHECK THE KERR CENTER WEBSITE
www.kerrcenter.com**

for special online articles, as well as complete array of publications, including *Field Notes*, and information on staff, programs, and history.



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Our Summer
Field Days!*