



People are discovering the local food system

By Mike Callicrate

In the newly released food film, Fresh, Russ Kremer proudly proclaims, "They [consumers] want my pigs...they want my product!"

Russ is a long-time hog farmer who decided that doing what is best for the hogs, as well as the people who eat his pork, is what matters, even though it's more work and more costly. When someone discovers the difference between the pork Russ produces from his family farm in Missouri — considered the ultimate in hog heaven — and the pork from Smithfield's industrial factory farms, that's something to celebrate.

Today, thanks to valuable books like Fast Food Nation and Omnivore's Dilemma along with compelling and inspirational films such as Food Inc. and Fresh, many more people are making the discovery that good food from real farmers, who they actually know, can make a huge difference in their lives and communities.

More people are voting with their forks to support a better food system, and even though the food they are eating costs more than factory food, it is also more valuable. The food tastes better and is more satisfying. Also, they can know and trust the farmers and ranchers who grew it.

Looking Local, Buying Global

The desire to buy local represents the best opportunity yet to make meaningful improvements in our food system. Regrettably, the corporate food industry is taking advantage of the term "local" while blocking competition and market access to independently owned restaurants and retail food stores so desperately needed by local farmers and ranchers. One recent illustration is the actions of Sysco, the largest food service company in the world. In nearby urban markets, they are buying a token amount of local produce and selling it below cost to their restaurant customers. Of course, Sysco controls the pricing of the many items it provides and is able to adjust to maximize their profits. This is an unfair market distorting practice.

Big retailers like Walmart and Whole Foods know the benefit of using local family farmers to enhance their image while they continue to sell cheap food and drive down prices paid to farmers. As a result, supply and demand signals are being blocked. Consumers are unable to make good choices based on origin, quality and price. Family farmers are shut out of the local market while their picture hangs above the imported meat and produce. The new local and regional food systems we so desperately need will continue to die in their infancy unless fairness, transparency and truth in advertising are restored to the marketplace. It should be impossible for an establishment to proclaim itself "local" when serving farmed Asian seafood, Tyson chicken, beef from Brazilian corporate giant JBS, Mexican produce and Chinese garlic.

When the educated consumer starts demanding "local," the corporate marketing departments change the words on the packaging, but the inflexible,

ravenous supply chain continues to get its low cost industrialized food from wherever it is the cheapest. Without access to a fair market, family farmers sell what they can at local farmers markets — generating far less than what is needed to make a living. From Wendy's marketing slogan "Better than Fast Food" to Chipotle's "Food with Integrity" to Whole Foods' "I'm A Local," eaters are being played for fools, and family farmers and ranchers with better and healthier food alternatives can't get a fair break.

Even locally owned eateries, best positioned to accommodate local suppliers with their advantages of on-site decision making, flexible menus, portion control management and pricing, have been trained too long to only consider one thing — price. Most don't realize how dramatically food quality has declined under the industrial food system. They, too, often hide behind the false and misleading marketing provided by their food service supplier. They are persuaded with complimentary trips to fancy food shows where special offers are made, if they will commit to long-term exclusive deals. Attractive labels, catchy family farm slogans, clean sounding names like Emerald Valley all mislead restaurants into buying the same old stuff in a new and prettier box.

Hope may have finally arrived

A predatory marketplace, with powerful global corporations placing profits over ethics and integrity, has blocked family farmers and ranchers from connecting with local eaters for too long. This could change with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack's, launching of the United States Department of Agriculture's new "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative. Secretary Vilsack says that rebuilding rural America is his number one priority. A big job, considering after the last 50 years of pillage by big agribusiness, rural America in many respects resembles the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina.

Secretary Vilsack appears to recognize the enormous wealth-creating potential and critical food security benefits of local food from our own family farms and ranches. I know that Dudley Butler does. He is a longtime independent cattleman and defender of fair and open markets. Mr. Butler was recently appointed to the potentially powerful position of administrator for Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, the agency within the Department of Agriculture charged with protecting competition in the marketplace — a job left unattended for decades.

We need a new closer-to-home food model that eaters can trust and that better serves the economic, nutritional and health interests of our communities and our nation. At the same time, we find ourselves once again going up against the corporate lobbyists, who intend to keep things the same.

Mr. Callicrate is an independent cattle producer, business entrepreneur and political activist, particularly outspoken in addressing the rural and social impacts of current economic trends.



News From the Past

5 years ago - 2004

There are 35 less children starting school in St. Francis school this year than last year. As of Monday there are 330 students enrolled.

Ward Cassidy, St. Francis school counselor, has had his first book, "A Quail Hunt With Dad" marketed.

The new entrance to the Cheyenne County Hospital

is actually the old entrance at the front of the building. The business office has been remodeled, giving more room. The staff has been busy moving from their temporary office in the basement to the new office.

Video Kingdom is celebrating 20 years in business in St. Francis with an open house.

Homecoming candidates include Kelsey Dunn, Amy

Grace, Brooke Lucas, Ale' Tygart, Chelsey Weeden, Andrew Feikert, Gabe Gienger, Tanner Kinen, Derek Ross and Seth Swihart. Feikert was voted king and Weeden queen.

Brent Rueb, St. Francis, has invented the Predator Sniper Styx which is the only camouflaged shooting stick on the market.

Hangin' With Marge

By Margaret Bucholtz



Knee Surgery

However in real life I know that isn't important either.

Now that the time is getting closer I am starting to worry a little. Kurt is going to take care of me. He is taking at least a week off. He did mention that I might get a little tired of egg sandwiches as that is all he knows how to cook, except for popcorn. He is thinking he might throw in a peanutbutter sandwich once in a while. I think he is thinking this will get me up if for nothing other than to fix a meal.

Back to the surgery itself, why the doctors give you a DVD of what they are going to do is a little unreal. I watched on the DVD that in order to do the knee replacement they cut your leg in

half and put in a plastic thing. Now I can just see them pounding these parts into your leg with a big hammer and attaching them with a screwdriver.

I told Kurt about this and asked him if he knew that.

He told me he did and that was his biggest fear.

When I asked him "Why?" thinking he would say that he didn't want me to hurt that bad. His reply was, "I just hope they get it back on with both feet going in the same direction. If they don't and you are lost in the snow I won't know if you are coming or going."

Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



scmcormick@nwkans.com
A funeral was held last Monday for a long-time Cheyenne County resident: Bob Yost.

Through my job as ad manager for the papers I spent a good deal of time visiting with Mr. Yost at his Ford dealership in St. Francis. Here's what I'll remember about him.

Bob could be a tough character. My first few meetings showed me that he knew about running a business and how the newspaper could benefit it, if he chose to use it. It was always going to be his call.

Maybe it was his way of testing me, but I seemed to pass. With time our interactions became more casual and our talks spread well beyond advertising.

On several occasions the phone would ring at the Herald office and it would be Bob with a news tip for me. Having been mayor, a business leader and active member

in the community, he always seemed to know the story before it reached us. He was a great source of information.

What drew me to Bob was that he and my father were both born in 1927. They came from the same stock. Growing up during the Depression and World War II, each knew that the world could be brutal and there were no hand-outs. However, both realized that

America was a land of opportunity, as long as you were willing to work hard for it. And each could have a strong exterior that masked how much they cared for others.

I'm glad, through my job, that I got to know this man and can take a few minutes to write down my thoughts. He will be missed.

GOD SAYS

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. **Luke 2:4-5**

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Wed. Bible Study 7 p.m.

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
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Weekday Mass 8 a.m.
Confessions Sat. 4-4:30

First Baptist Church
2nd & Scott • 332-3921
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Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m.,
Wed. AWANA Club
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Salem Lutheran Church
332-3002
Pastor Chris Farmer
Sunday School 10 a.m.
Morning Worship 11 a.m.
Communion 3rd Sunday

St. Francis Community Church
332-3150
204 N. Quincy Street
www.sfccfamily.com
Pastor: David Butler
Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
Potluck & Communion -
Every 2nd Sunday
Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.

United Methodist Church
Church Office 332-2292,
Church 332-2254,
512 S. Scott
Pastor Morita Truman
Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m.
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.

Solid Rock Baptist Church
412 S. Denison
Welcomes You!
Pastor Allen Coon
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30
Prayer Meeting, Wed
7:30 p.m.

Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC
202 N. College
Pastor Ken Hart
332-2928 Pars. 332-2312
Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Eve. Bible Study 7 p.m.
Communion 1st Sunday
of the Month

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
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Pastor Jerry Nowack
Sabbath School 9:30
Morning Worship 10:45

First Christian Church
Pastor Jeff Landers
332-2956 • 118 E. Webster
Bible Fellowship 9:15 a.m.
Church Service 10:15 a.m.

St. Francis Equity

Saint Francis Herald

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202 S. Benton • St. Francis
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