

Food for Thought

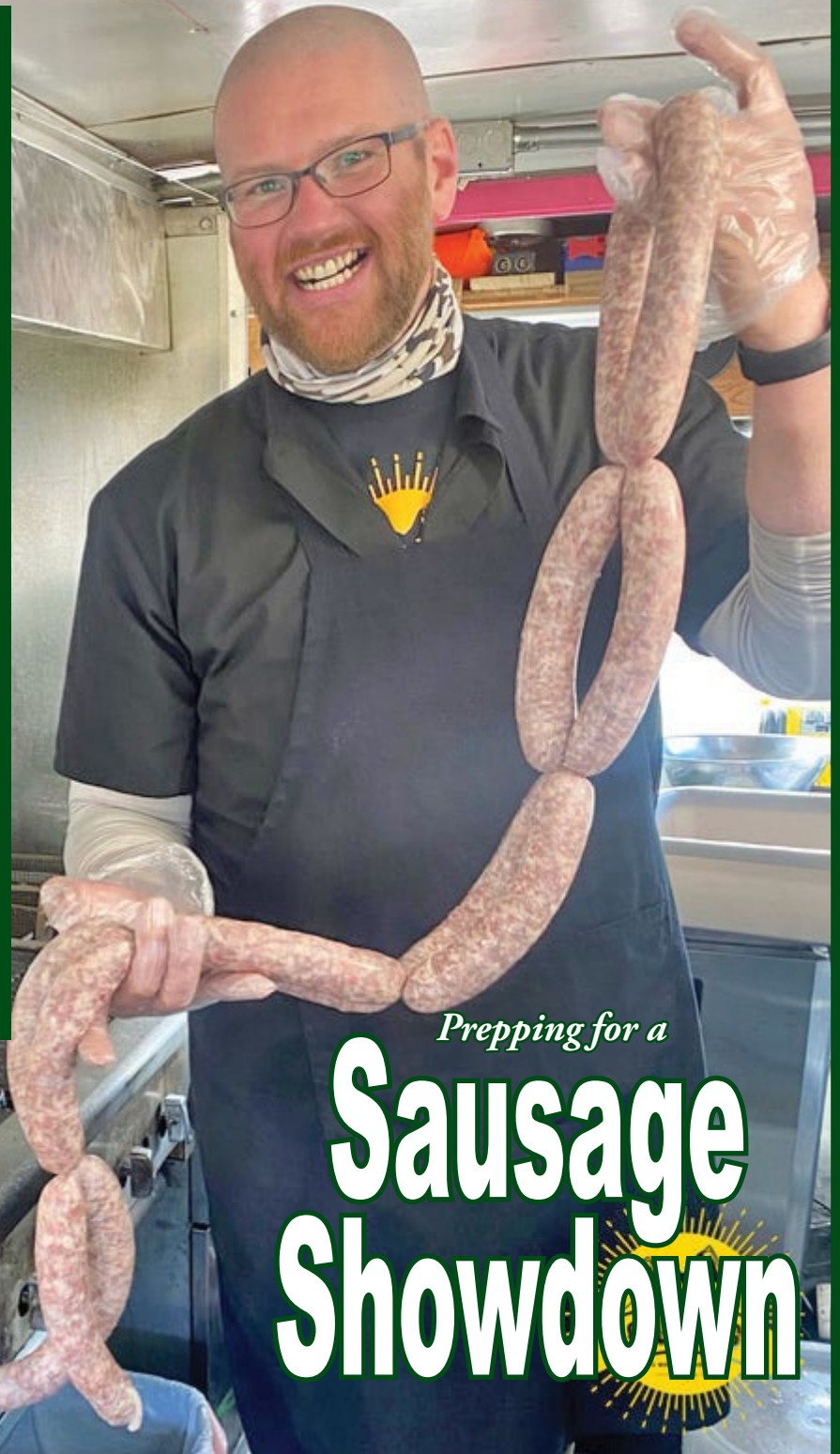
People • Products • Purpose

October 2021

“Millions of men have lived to fight, build palaces and boundaries, shape destinies and societies; but the most compelling force of all time has been the force of originality and creation profoundly affecting the human spirit.” —
Photographer Ansel Adams

IT'S OCTOBER... SO BRING ON THE SAUSAGE!

When life gives you coronavirus, why not make sausage? During last year's upheaval, Nick Yatso decided to take a leap and follow a dream. For him, that meant putting on hold plans for a wedding and buying a food truck instead. Similarly, when he and his fiancée and business partner Bria Naylor wanted to stage some type of celebration to mark one year in business, things turned out a little differently than originally expected. Instead of making it just about their own small business, they turned it into a free family-friendly festival honoring the local craft food scene and the artisans who supported each other as they muddled through a punishing pandemic. The result is the Solsage Food Truck Sausagefest at Red Leg Brewing on October 1, which will bring together the top dogs in the sausage world (including Ranch Foods Direct) for a little friendly competition but also fun and fellowship. MORE DETAILS PAGE 2.



Prepping for a

Sausage Showdown

Party with pork

Bria Naylor, shown at left with her fiance Nick Yatsko, co-owns and operates the Solsage Food Truck. She's also the party planner behind a first-ever area-wide Sausage Fest. "It snowballed," she says. "I started reaching out to other businesses, and it just kind of took on a life of its own. It's turned into a celebration of small businesses in general, I think, and of all of us just making it through this crazy time."

One of the first calls Bria made as she was planning the event was to Ranch Foods Direct, a company that has been a source of inspiration for the couple since they first arrived from the East Coast. "RFD is a staple here in the community, and they've been on our radar from the moment we moved here," she says. "The growth they've had over the past 20 years, the customer following, has been just phenomenal." Locals don't always realize how many local food options exist, and she liked the idea of giving people a chance to taste and sample different approaches to craft sausage-making. "I just want them to know there are other options out there that are local, fresh, organic and chemical free," she says.

IDEAL VENUE: The outdoor festival will be held, rain or shine, at an astro-turfed ballfield next to Red Leg's new 14,000-square-foot taproom at 2323 Garden of the Gods Road (see photo below). It's the first big event at the new venue, which allows for "a beautiful flow" between indoor and outdoor spaces and breathtaking views of Pikes Peak, according to Bria. (The festival is free and open to the public, but visitors who want to vote for the People's Choice award need to buy tickets, which are ten for \$10. Ten percent of proceeds will go to the Mt. Carmel Veteran Services Center, the charity of choice selected by Red Leg, a veteran owned and supportive business.)

BRIA'S FAVORITE FALL FLAVORS: "I just put a pot of water on the stove with orange peels and cloves and vanilla and a couple of slices of apple. That's my favorite smell to fill the house, and having it on the stove simmering makes it feel like fall."



Ranch Foods Direct's own Chef Monika is preparing three different sausages for SausageFest on Oct. 1: the smoked Andouille, which she makes every February for the Mardi Gras gumbo; the ever-popular smoked cheddarwurst; and a mild Italian sausage. All three are made from Callicrate Pork and feature fresh spices purchased from the Savory Spice Shop downtown (110 N Tejon St; ph 719-633-8803.) All three sausages will be available at the Fillmore store throughout the month of October to help home cooks celebrate their own version of Octoberfest.

MONIKA'S FAVORITE FALL FLAVORS: "Squash is definitely an exciting thing to work with at this time of year, as well as sweet potatoes. They bring a sweet but also hearty element to recipes." Look for her **butternut squash soup** in store this fall.

EASY FALL MEAL: Monika has returned to making her famous **smoked brisket chili** too. "I like to serve it over a baked potato with my horseradish cheese sauce on top."



Digging deeper

Tyler Cornelius, a visiting assistant professor of history and environmental science at Colorado College regularly brings classes out to tour the Peak to Plains Food Hub, most recently in mid-September (class shown at right.) "It's an incredible tool for teaching and learning," he says.



Tyler's past research and his current classes emphasize the cultural and social implications of how food and the environment intersect, but on a more basic level he's also encouraging students to dig deeper in order to better understand important issues in modern life. "It's super-unique to have a regional food hub right here in Colorado Springs, in fact you could probably count the ones that exist all on one hand, but they fill such an important role in connecting food producers to their communities. I bring the students here so they have a chance to see what alternative food systems can look like, especially at mid-scale, and to help them visualize a food system that's more competitive and more oriented to the needs of producers and consumers. Mike is always so open and generous with the students. He doesn't pull any punches; he's very outspoken, and that's good. The students tend to want what everybody wants: a quick easy explanation about what's best to eat. But food systems are complex and always involve trade-offs. He frames things in really useful ways and says provocative things, which they have to think through. It's easy for students to romanticize local food producers without understanding the challenges they face. But if they can go and talk to people who are living the struggle, it allows them to think more critically about what they might do to inspire change and how that might be reflected in public policy."

WORDS TO LIVE BY: "Eating is an agricultural act," by the essayist Wendell Berry. And a corollary: "Food is where the world enters the self," originally from the French. "Everybody eats, so food is a great introduction to critical inquiry," Tyler observes.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE RFD PRODUCTS? "Lately we've been buying the pre-made crockpot carnitas. We've also been buying a lot of short ribs. I also really like the savory pies from Mountain Pie Co; we buy them all the time. And the bacon. The El Chapin food truck in the parking lot is phenomenal."

FAVORITE FALL FLAVORS: "Smoked meat, and the different squashes, and having good fresh apples again. One thing we always do at this time of year is make applesauce in the crockpot."



CROCKPOT APPLESAUCE
3 pounds apples (roughly 8 larger apples or 12 smaller apples)
¼ cup honey
1 cinnamon stick
½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
a strip of fresh lemon peel (opt.)

Core the apples, peel if desired, and cut into chunks. Place in a 6-quart or larger slow cooker. Add the honey, cinnamon stick, and pumpkin pie spice along with lemon peel. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 2 1/2 to 3 hours, until the apples break down, stirring occasionally. Remove the cinnamon and lemon and use an immersion blender or food mill to purée. Allow to cool. Taste and add more honey, if desired.

IS BEEF PRODUCTION ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE?

In a recent radio interview, CSU professor, author and animal welfare trailblazer Temple Grandin responded, "I have done a lot of thinking about this. You've got more and more people questioning cattle, just looking at them as terrible environment wreckers. I have seen pasture that has never been grazed and looks terrible. I have also seen pasture that has been overgrazed, and I have seen pasture that has been grazed right and it has actually improved the land."

FOOD FOR THE SOIL: The earth needs diverse living roots to thrive. At Callicrate Cattle Co., Ranch Foods Direct owner Mike Callicrate grows a mix of fall cover crops including foxtail millet, sorghum sudangrass, turnips, cowpeas and sunflowers for the purpose of enriching organic matter while improving aeration, water retention and fertility. These forages will also be used for winter grazing, as livestock and crops are rotated across the land.



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