

GRASS-FED BEEF—*It's What's for Dinner!*



Karen & David Shockey

Muddy Creek Ranch (MCR) is located in Wilsall, Montana, in the heart of cow country. At first glance, we look like any other cow-calf operation, but look closer, and you'll see this is no ordinary cattle ranch. MCR has a 100% grass-fed, all-natural, and totally integrated cow herd. All cattle are born, raised, harvested and sold in Montana. We're making the statement "from pasture to plate" a reality every day!

Why grass-fed beef as opposed to conventional, feed-lot finished beef? First of all, most feed-lot practices are non-natural and tough on the cows! Animals raised in huge factory-farms are given diets designed to boost their productivity and lower costs. The main ingredients are genetically modified grain and soy that are kept at artificially low prices by

government subsidies. To further cut costs, the feed may also contain unhealthy "by-product feedstuff."

Also, a high-grain diet can cause physical problems for ruminants (cud-chewing animals such as cattle, dairy cows, goats, bison and sheep.)

Ruminants are designed to eat fibrous grasses, plants, and shrubs—not starchy, low-fiber grain. When they are switched from pasture to grain, they can become afflicted with a number of disorders, and are often fed antibiotics to stave off disease.

Grass feeding is healthier for the environment, too. When animals are raised outdoors on pasture, their manure is spread over a wide area of land, making it a welcome source of organic fertilizer, not a "waste management problem."

Grass-fed cows (or bison, lamb and goats) produce meat that is much better for humans. It has less total fat and saturated fat, and less cholesterol and calories.

Grass-fed beef contains a ten-fold increase in the antioxidant Beta Carotene and is 3-to-4-times higher in its concentration of vitamin E than grain-fed beef. Another significant health benefit is its high concentration of Conjugated Linoleic Acids (CLAs) with their proven antioxidant, anti-cancer and fat-burning properties. Ruminants grazing on pasture alone produce meat, milk and cheeses that contain 3-to-5-times more CLAs than animals fed on conventional grain diets.



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Also, grass-fed beef contains a much healthier Omega 3-to-Omega 6 ratio. Today's Western diets are far too high in the Omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids. This promotes many ailments including cardiovascular disease, cancer, inflammatory and auto-immune diseases. People that eat diets high in Omega 3s are less likely to have high blood pressure and are 50% less likely to suffer a heart attack.

Yes, grass-fed beef is much better for you, but how do you get cattle addicted to grain to perform in an all-grass system? We researched that very question and found the answer in a selected breed called Lowline Angus. This cow is smaller framed and very efficient in converting pasture grasses into a high-quality carcass. MCR has become one of the country's premier breeders of Lowline Angus, winning top honors in national shows all across the US.

In addition, we employ artificial insemination and embryo transfers to produce superior animals to put into our breeding program. We then breed Lowline Angus with native Montana cows to come up with a unique commercial herd. The cows are finished out at 1,000 pounds, are highly efficient on pasture, and are great milkers. They produce a market animal that is adaptive to Montana's climate and that converts grass to high-quality beef that is tender and delicious.

To ensure the quality of the meat we produce, MCR uses ultrasound technology to preselect the animals to be harvested. The selected animals are brought to local, USDA-approved, Montana plants for harvesting to ensure quality.

The meat is then sold to the public by the piece or the side directly through local farmers' markets or area restaurants. The *Wilsall Bar and Café* is jointly owned with the ranch and proudly serves MCR Lowline Angus beef for lunch and dinner. The *Fresco Café* in Bozeman has recently been added to the list of restaurants now serving our locally raised, grass-fed beef.

So, when someone asks, "What's for dinner?" We at MCR say, "Have some of our tender and tasty grass-fed beef—it's also healthy for you!" ■

Muddy Creek Ranch is owned by Bob and Edie Tomasko and managed by David and Karen Shockey. They are located at 163 Muddy Creek Road in Wilsall. To get some great, grass-fed beef, call them at 406- 578-2363 or 406-600-7179.

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