

Wrap Up of the June Ground Beef Harvest July 2013

Dear Friends, Neighbors and Customers

The purpose of this letter is simply to report on how the June harvest went and how we will make it better next year.

First, a little background information that may be helpful to you.

We started harvesting mature, grass-fed animals for summer ground beef three years ago.

It has become very popular with you. This year about 120 families participated.

We do not promote grass-fed beef for cuts this early in the season. That is because to truly finish well on grass, most animals need a whole summer on excellent pasture. Some need a summer and most of a fall.

Animals for ground meat are a different story, however.

Most of the animals harvested for ground meat are mature cows that failed to produce a calf.

These animals are between three and five years old (still relatively young) and in very nice condition.

If these cows were processed into steaks, many of the cuts would be tough. Toughness is not an issue with ground meat, however.

The age and grass diet of these animals produces great tasting hamburger.

Because these animals are older, we can sell them to you at a lower price. This year the price is \$2.50 per hanging pound versus \$3 for beef for cuts.

It is my intention to continue offering animals for ground meat each June and each fall.

Because the animals are destined for ground meat only, the state regulations allow us to sell in 1/10th animal portions versus ¼ for animals for cuts.

That allows you to buy in smaller portions.

Generally the June harvest went well but it will be smoother next year.

First I want to thank you for paying so promptly. That is terrifically helpful to me. Because you pay promptly, I can focus on caring for your animals and much less time on tracking payments. Thank you.

The completion of some orders and especially some processed meats took longer than expected.

I apologize for that.

A couple factors were involved.

One was a severe storm that cut off power in Foley for a number of days.

The other cause for delay was the fact that I underestimated your demand by more than a factor of two.

I initially scheduled between six and eight animals with Quality Meats. Once the harvest began, many more of you ordered. I ended up bringing in fifteen animals for processing.

The volume of work caused some material shortages and other related delays at Quality Meats.

In the future that will be managed with better planning on my part.

You can of course help by ordering ahead.

Next year, we will start the June harvest a week earlier and spread it out more evenly.

Orders for processed meats, wieners, sausages etc. will be scheduled to start the first week.

In that way, everything should be complete before the end of June.

The distribution of broth bones, marrow bones, ox-tail, tallow and liver went superbly.

One of our goals this year was to encourage you to use these parts. If not used by you, these parts become waste material.

To facilitate usage, Nancy and I devised a method for apportioning the parts.

Apparently our scheme was pretty close to being on mark. I think everyone who wanted packages got them and all of the parts are gone.

We will handle these parts in a similar fashion for the fall harvest for both cuts and ground meat.

In an earlier letter I promised recipes or preparation help for the above “parts.”

I was probably over my head in writing that. Actually, a number of you are experts on using bones, tallow and ox-tails.

I have pasted a few recipes that I lifted from Sarah’s blog.

www.sandhillfarmsarah.wordpress.com

You should go there yourself and explore further.

Converse with Sarah. She knows stuff and is happy to help.

The broth and marrow recipes are pretty simple.

For tallow, Sarah points out that it does not really smell like pig fat (lard) when rendered. You can easily do that in the house or on your outdoor grill.

These odors are not really bad; we are just no longer used to them because we so seldom fry foods.

The tallow was provided to you ground for easier melting.

Melt it slowly at a low temperature. It melts below the boiling point of water. Once it is melted, it can be re-softened like butter.

We normally strain the heated tallow through a kitchen cloth to clarify.

Ox-tail is made as a stew. I see many recipes on the internet. Phyllis is the ox-tail cooking expert. I thought I had her recipe but cannot find it.

Phyllis, please send it to me and to Sarah for blog posting.

Lots of liver recipes on the Internet too.

The bison, beef cattle, hogs and smaller critters are having a fabulous summer. Details to come in other letters.

Best possible regards.

Tom

The “Recipe” for Broth

Slowly simmer Broth Bones all day with a bit of salt in a covered stock pot. Add additional water if necessary.

You can use most any bone for broth, but traditionally a broth bone is a part of the animal that does not naturally have much meat on it. Soup bones will have a nice amount of meat. Of course, you are making broth in your soup as you cook the soup bones...but I digress.

Skim anything floating on the top.

Let cool. A layer of tallow (fat) will form. Skim off the tallow and save for soaping.

The broth will be a wonderful, healthy and full of minerals. When cool it will gel. This is a sign of a good, healthy broth.

Warm the next day. Salt or season to taste. You can add veggies here if you like to add more body to the broth. Remove bones. They should be perfectly clean by now.

Skim if needed.

Use immediately or freeze for use later. I have not done it, but you probably can preserve it by “canning” as well.

Roast Marrow Bones in a 450 degree oven for 15 minutes. Salt and serve spread on toast.

“As a youngster we often ate marrow. My mom would scoop it out of the cooked bones and spread it on toast. Each of us kids would get a little piece as an appetizer. It is delicious. The toast was always homemade bread. The marrow should be eaten hot and spread thin as flavoring, more like butter than cheese on the bread.

I recently saw that at least one restaurant in the Twin Cities is serving marrow like this on their appetizer menu.

It is not a cheap treat either!

Joe”

Bone Marrow Broth

From Rachael

1. Push the marrow out of the bones and melt it, it will melt like lard.
2. Use the marrow to brown the bones and some chopped onions.
3. Cover the pot and “sweat” the soup bones with onion by cooking them covered and on low for 20 minutes or so.
4. Add enough water to cover the bones with water, some salt, and simmer for 1-2 hours.
5. Strain the broth through a strainer and cheese cloth. 6. When cool, pull the meat off the bones and add to the broth.

This is a pretty basic stock recipe that is easy to taper to your own tastes and makes an excellent base for any beef soup. To make a richer stock, after browning the bones and onion, you can remove them, add a little red wine, and reduce the juices to a syrup, before re-adding all the ingredients to sweat the bones.

Magic Balm from tallow

The “recipe”

- 1) Melt to liquid state 1/2 c. rendered beef tallow.
- 2) Stir in 1 Tbs. Olive Oil.
- 3) If desired, add essential oils to scent.
- 4) Pour into jar and set in fridge. The faster “set” in the fridge helps prevent the fats from separating while cooling.

5) Enjoy.

We are addicted.

Thank you Cecilee.