

Newsletter – Summer 2023

Reservations 2023

Summer is upon us and all the new lambs are out on pasture. The steers over-wintered nicely and we've had some good rain, though it's drying up fast in the last several weeks.



New Lambs on Pasture – Thor on Guard

Assuming everything goes according to plan, the first lambs will be available for delivery at the end of August and the first beef about three weeks later. We have 8 steers this year and about 75 lambs, so we expect to have lamb available until November and beef until December, but as usual, it all depends on the weather, the animals, and how many reservations we get.

We are now taking reservations for the fall. Let us know what you want today.

Information and pricing for our beef and lamb products can be found [here](#) on our website. We encourage you to reserve soon, since we often sell out of items quickly. Remember that it costs nothing to make a reservation and you can change your mind at any time. Send your requests to sales@dunhillranch.com (please

include your phone number in the e-mail) or call us at 575-854-2847.

Once again, Jessica and I will be selling our lamb and beef at the [Downtown Growers' Market](#) in Albuquerque (Saturday mornings starting Aug 26th) and at the [Socorro Farmers' Market](#) (Tuesday evenings starting Aug 29th). There are lots of other local farmers at these markets and it is a great way to get fresh food that is responsibly produced.

We are still selling our beef and lamb "by-the-pound", as opposed to by-the-piece including our whole and half animals, which are priced based on the weight of meat delivered to you.



Steers Bedded Down on Winter Pasture

Prices for everything we need on the ranch have been steadily rising, so we have found it necessary to raise the prices of some of our products, but we have kept the increases small so as to keep our meat affordable. We hope you understand and find our prices fair.

A New Ranch Hand

Replacing a key employee is always a tricky thing for a small business. There is very little room for error. Misjudging the newcomer's

Lamb Shoulder Roast

Here's a quick and easy way to make our favorite cut of lamb- boneless shoulder roast.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

- 2 lb boneless, tied, shoulder roast
- 4 large cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbs fresh rosemary, chopped
- 2 tsp fresh thyme leaves
- ½ tsp coarse salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 3 Tbs olive oil
- 2 lbs baby potatoes, halved
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Instructions

1. Pre-heat your oven to 450 degrees. In a small bowl mix garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt, pepper, and 1 Tbs of the olive oil. Rub the mixture over all surfaces of the lamb. Do not untie the roast.
2. Toss the potatoes with the remaining 2 Tbs of olive oil in a large ceramic baking dish, or roasting pan. Season with additional salt and pepper.
3. Place the lamb on top of the potatoes and roast in the oven until the internal temperature is at least 120 degrees (Rare), about 1 hour. Continue roasting until you reach your desired internal temperature (125 Medium Rare, 130 Medium, 145 Medium Well).
4. Remove the oven, cover with aluminum foil and let rest for 15 minutes. Then remove the twine, slice, and serve.

Turkish Lamb Kebabs

This is a traditional Turkish kebab recipe adapted by my friend N. Cordova. He tested it on some real live Turks with whom he was working (in Turkey) and got a unanimous thumbs up. I made this recipe myself the other night and I second the judgement of his co-workers. Easy to make and delicious!

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

- 2 lbs ground lamb, cold
- ½ red onion, finely chopped

- 8 large cloves of garlic, minced
- 1½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp dried rosemary, roughly ground
- 1 tsp dried sage, roughly ground
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1-4 Tbs white flour
- Wooden meat skewers
- Charcoal and hardwood chips

Instructions

1. In a small bowl, mix the onion, garlic, and all spices. Put the lamb in a large bowl and slowly add the spice mixture, thoroughly mixing the lamb and spices after each addition.
2. Add flour slowly in 1 Tbs increments and continue mixing until the result is firm, but not sticky. In my case, the entire mixture became a firm ball after about 2 Tbs, but the amount you need to add will vary with the temperature and fat content of the lamb. Place the bowl in the fridge to chill until the grill is ready.
3. Prepare a charcoal fire medium-hot with nice glowing coals.
4. Mold the ¼ of the lamb mixture onto a pair of meat skewers separated by about ½ inch. Using a pair of skewers, though not exactly traditional, helps hold the meat together when you turn it on the grill. Form the meat in the shape of a long tube about 1¼ to 1½ inch in diameter. You can roll the meat with your hands on a cutting board to achieve a nice even cylinder.
5. Repeat with the remaining lamb mixture and skewers.
6. Grill the skewers over direct heat turning every couple of minutes until all sides are browned. Adding hardwood chips to the fire adds a nice smoky touch to the meat.
7. Serve with rice, couscous, and grilled vegetables. Add a Tzatziki sauce on the side, if you like that sort of thing.

Beef Burgundy

This dish, while time-consuming to make, is worth every minute. It's chunky enough to eat with a fork, and you will have everyone hoping for more. Yes, in the end, it's just beef stew, but that's like saying an F16 is just an airplane. Serve this with some crusty French bread and a hearty red wine.

Serves 6

Ingredients for Bouquet Garni

- 6 oz salt pork, or meaty, thick-cut bacon
- Cheesecloth, doubled, about 18" square
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 8 large cloves of garlic, crushed
- 2 large bay leaves, crumbled
- ½ tsp black peppercorns
- ½ oz of dried mushrooms

Ingredients for Stew

- 4 pounds boneless beef chuck roast
- Coarse salt & freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup water for deglazing
- 4 Tbs butter
- ⅓ cup white flour
- 1¾ cup home-made beef broth (if you have it), or low sodium chicken broth, if you don't.
- 1 bottle (750 ml) good Pinot Noir wine
- 1½ cups water
- 1 tsp tomato paste

Ingredients for Vegetables

- 8 oz frozen pearl onions, or fresh pearl onions blanched and peeled
- 8 oz small mushrooms, trimmed
- 8 oz carrots, cut into 1" chunks
- 1½ Tbs butter
- 1½ Tbs sugar
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¾ cup water
- 2 Tbs brandy or cognac
- 3 Tbs fresh parsley, minced

Instructions

1. Skip this step if using bacon. Remove the rind from the salt pork and cut into 4 pieces. Boil both the rind and the salt pork

in 3 cups of water for a few minutes, then drain off the water.

2. Make a bouquet garni. Spread out the cheesecloth. Place on it the rind from the salt pork (skip if you are using bacon), parsley, thyme, onions, carrots, garlic, bay leaves, peppercorns, and mushrooms on the cheesecloth. Fold up the edges and tie at the top with kitchen string to make a neat bundle. Place in a heavy, lidded oven-proof dish (hereafter, "Dutch oven").
3. Make lardons and fat. Cut salt pork or bacon into ¼"x¼"x1" pieces ("lardons") and fry in a heavy skillet over medium heat until they are light brown and crisp. Remove the lardons to the Dutch oven. Spoon off all but 2 Tbs of the rendered fat and save it.
4. Brown the beef. Cut the chuck roast into large pieces (1¼" to 1½" cubes) trimming away all membranes, silver skin and any large pockets of fat. Season the meat generously with salt and pepper. Place the beef cubes into the skillet, leaving plenty of space around each one so that they brown and don't steam. Raise the heat to high. Fry for about 2 minutes and then turn the cubes with a fork or tongs as soon as one side is good and brown. Repeat on at least 2 other sides (about 8 minutes total). Remove the beef pieces and place them in the Dutch oven as they get fully brown. When the skillet is empty, add a half-cup of water and deglaze, scraping with a wooden spoon to loosen all the stuck-on brown bits. Pour the resulting liquid into the Dutch oven. If the pan is still messy, wash it out. Repeat as often as necessary, with the remaining beef cubes, using the reserved fat from step 3. Note that if at any point you need more fat, you can use additional bacon fat or olive oil.

Note: Be careful not to let the fat burn when browning the beef. If it looks like it might burn, immediately remove the pan from the heat, take the beef out, and deglaze with some water, scraping off any brown bits from the pan. If the resulting liquid does not smell charred, you can add it to the Dutch oven. If it smells like charcoal or has lots of black bits in it,

throw the liquid away. In either case reheat the pan with more fat and continue browning the remaining beef.

5. Make a roux. In the same now-empty skillet that you used to brown the beef, melt the butter and heat until foaming. Then add the white flour and stir with a whisk until you have a smooth paste. If the mixture is too clumpy, add a little bacon fat or olive oil to smooth it out. If it is too runny, add a little more flour. Continue constant whisking, making sure to frequently scrape the edges of the pan, until the mixture is the color of peanut butter and has a nice toasty aroma, about 5 minutes. Then whisk in your broth adding extra water as necessary to keep the roux smooth. Simmer, stirring frequently until you have a thick, smooth sauce. Remove it from the heat and add to the Dutch oven.
6. Cook the stew. Pre-heat oven to 300 degrees. Add 3 cups of wine, 1½ cups water, and the tomato paste to the Dutch oven. Place it on the stove, stir to combine all the ingredients, and heat until just boiling. Then put the bouquet garni and use a spoon to make sure it is sitting on the bottom of the dish and almost completely submerged in liquid. If needed, you can add a little more water. Cover the Dutch oven and place it in the oven for about 3½ hours. Check on it every 45 minutes or so, and add water if it looks like too much has evaporated. At the end of cooking, the meat should be fork-tender.
7. Reduce the sauce. Take the bouquet garni out of the Dutch oven, place it in a clean bowl. Take the meat out of the sauce with a slotted spoon and set aside. Wait about 15 minutes and then, if there is much fat on the sauce, skim it off and discard. Then squeeze out all the liquid you can from the now-cooled bouquet garni and add it to the sauce. Bring the sauce to a boil and then reduce to a brisk simmer. Stir frequently and allow the sauce to reduce down to about 3 cups, about 20 minutes, during which time you can make the vegetables. When the sauce is done, it should have the consistency of heavy cream.

8. Make the vegetables. Boil the chopped carrots in water for about 3 minutes. Then drain the water and put the pearl onions, carrots, butter, sugar, salt, and water in a heavy skillet and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer until the onions are tender (this should only take a minute or so if the onions were previously frozen). Then uncover, increase the heat to high and simmer until almost all the liquid is gone, about 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms and a little more salt and continue to cook stirring frequently until the mushrooms release their liquid, and all the vegetables are nicely glazed, about another 5 minutes. Remove the vegetables to a bowl, deglaze the skillet with a little water and then add this liquid to the sauce still reducing in step 7.
9. Prepare for serving. With your sauce now the consistency of heavy cream, reduce the heat to low. Add the beef and vegetables to the sauce, along with any accumulated juices, the remaining wine, and brandy. Cover the Dutch oven and simmer on the stove until everything is nicely heated, about 5 minutes. Then serve in wide-bottom soup plates and garnish with fresh parsley.



We'll be Over for Dinner!

A New Ranch Hand - Continued

abilities or work habits can cause years' worth of problems. But postponing the decision until the "perfect candidate" is available is seldom an option. So it has proved for us at Dunhill Ranch.

Our current herding dog, Finn, just turned 10 years old and while she still has the drive and ability to do the job, there is no denying that she is slowing down. In human terms, she is about 70, and more than eligible for retirement, but she has steadfastly refused to consider a part-time job as a greeter at Wally-World.



Finn - Not Ready to Retire. Don't Even Think It!

So, we spent a good bit of time last summer calling around to breeders of Border Collies, looking for a new pup that we could train to work with Finn and eventually take over when Finn agrees to retire.

It was a difficult search; most Border Collies these days are trained for the show ring or arena trials, and the true working dog, able to think for itself in the open field, and work out-of-sight of the shepherd is becoming hard to find. We finally found a breeder in Portales NM, who had an 8-month-old male pup that sounded promising. Jessica could not, unfortunately, make the trip at that time, so I hopped in the truck and drove 300 miles to go look at the pup. Finn insisted on coming along.

During the drive, I thought hard about all the points that I had to consider in order make a decision if this pup was right:

- Would he have the instinct to herd sheep?
- Would he have the desire to work?

- Would he have the confidence to work steers?
- Was he biddable, or would he try to dominate us?
- Was he physically sound?
- Was he smart enough to work on his own?
- Would Finn accept him and vice-versa?

All critical questions and some unanswerable until he was quite a bit older. But at least I had an idea of what to look for.

When we arrived in Portales, I was a little disconcerted to find out that the pup was spending almost all his time alone in a kennel outside, and did not even know his name at 8 months old! Clearly, he had had very little training. Fortunately, while he was very shy at first, he seemed to be interested in me and walked calmly with me to the sheep pen on a leash. He watched with great interest as his mother worked some sheep with the breeder, and I was relieved to see that his mother seemed to have a good instinct for how to move sheep. So, my first two questions could be answered "probably".



Blake - Learning to Move Lambs

When I first let him into the sheep pen, he was very tentative and reluctant to approach the sheep, but with a little encouragement, he started trying to move them. Shortly thereafter, he decided that this game was fun and he started chasing the sheep around the pen! Now was the time to see if he would listen to me or not. I attached a short length of string to his collar and succeeded in getting him to pass between the sheep and the fence without too much difficulty. This, and the fact that the

sheep had no inclination to challenge him, gave me a favorable impression of his confidence and his "presence", or ability to dominate livestock.

Once he was passing the sheep on the fence, it was then easy for me to step back and leave him alone on the other side of the sheep. At first, he was a little excited and continued to chase the sheep, but after a minute or two, he started to react to me; if I went to the left of the sheep, he'd go right, etc. Finally, to my amazement, he actually slowed down, and I was able to pick up the string and walk him calmly out of the pen.

At that point, I could be reasonably certain that he had instinct, desire, confidence, presence, and biddability. He appeared physically fit, and his breeder verified that he had had his puppy shots, was eating well, and that his ancestors had no serious health problems and were known for their cattle work. He certainly seemed to understand what I was trying to get him to do, so I gave him a passing grade on smarts too.

That left only one question: would Finn approve? Fortunately, the pup seemed quite keen on her, and she, while not demonstrative, showed remarkable patience with his puppy antics. Finn and I had a quick meeting and decided to hire "no-name" for Dunhill Ranch.

The first bit of "on-boarding" was to get him in the truck for the trip home. He, of course, had never been in a truck, and was quite scared until I allowed him to sit in my lap while I drove. Next, he simply had to have a name other than "puppy". I generally leave this task to my subconscious, and within a very few miles it occurred to me that in looks and attitude, he might do very well as "Blake". He seemed agreeable, and he spent the rest of the 300-mile trip learning that Blake was a good dog, and no, Blake was not allowed to chew the seat belt.

Once back at the ranch, Blake immediately started employee orientation. This was a rough time for him; his breeder did not provide such luxuries as doors, mirrors, wastebaskets, drawers, and furniture. For a time, each of these items was a source of much fear and wonder to him. For many days, he was terrified of Jessica's computer bag, immobile though it was, and refused to be in the same room with it.

Fortunately, by watching Finn's example, and with much patience and encouragement from Jessica and me, he was able to overcome his fears.

He is by now, at 1½ years old, a valued member of the vast enterprise which is Dunhill Ranch, and is starting to learn his duties with considerable spirit. I am happy to say that my initial impression of him has been justified and he shows great promise as a herding dog; the only question now is, do Jessica and I have what it takes to bring out the best in him? To be continued...



Blake, A Year Old and Right at Home

Pete's Job Title

People often ask me what do I do for a living. I usually answer that I'm a rancher and I raise sheep and cattle and leave it at that. But I have lately realized that when you say "rancher" to folks, they think of the horses and helicopters and the glamorous women and tough men of "Yellowstone". Doubtless there are ranchers that live with high drama, but not me. Sure, I spend a lot of time riding my horse, working with cattle, and buzzing around on an ATV, but that's only a small part of what I do.

What do I do for a living? A better question might be: "what don't I do?" Living on the back side of the Magdalena Mountains, way outside of anyone's "local service area", I do it all. I'm a plumber, electrician, carpenter, welder, heavy equipment operator, mechanic, mason, veterinarian, farrier, gardener, computer

technician, web designer, accountant, dog trainer, and Mr-Fix-It for just about anything from a toaster to a backhoe. One minute I'll be weighing lambs and the next, I'll be pounding out railroad spikes to make gate latches for my corrals. Once that's done, I'll switch to planting jalapeños, replacing the wheel bearings on my tractor, installing a new cattle drinker, or baking a loaf of bread.

While it might seem that I'm spreading myself way too thin, it's very satisfying, doing all these different things, though my life does have some curious features.

In the first place, almost everything I own is old. I drive a 25-year-old truck, dig with a 20-year-old backhoe, cut wood with a saw that was new when Richard Nixon was president, and still use hand-tools that are older than I am (62). My corrals are over 100 years old. Hell, even the computer I'm writing this on is 10 years out of date. While I sometimes yearn for the latest gadgets, I'm happy to know that most of the stuff that I own was made so that it *could be fixed*, and I much prefer fixing something to tossing it out. If I can't fix it, I'll usually strip it for parts before sending the rest to the recyclers. I hate waste.



Working on Solar Well Storage Tank

Secondly, I keep a pretty huge supply of materials and parts on hand. Nuts, bolts, screws, pipes, wires, and connectors in hundreds of different sizes and shapes. Wood, metal, rubber, plastic, fabric, oils, solvents and every other sort of raw material from bridge

beams to piano wires. Stuff accumulated over years that is waiting for the right re-use. Jessica often jokes that I don't have a "man-cave", but a "man-warehouse", but I can lay my hands on anything I need within a minute and I still have plenty of room to work in the shop.



Did I Really Drink All That Coffee?

One of the outcomes of this way of doing things is that there isn't a lot that you can throw at me where I can't make a fist of it. Lots of times, I've come up against a new problem and had to do some reading, watch a YouTube video or talk to neighbors about how they handled similar problems. Even if I get stuck for a while, I know that I'll figure it out in the end. I make a lot of mistakes, but try to learn from them. I rarely end a day without making some improvements, learning something new, and still having time to enjoy a beer after the work is done.

So, what do I do for a living? It's hard to say. Most of what I do every day is part of an ongoing effort to be more or less self-sufficient. The money that we make from selling beef and lamb covers the expenses and leaves a little over for profit. I suppose I could tell people that I was an entrepreneur, but that makes it sound like I hawk gadgets on "Shark Tank". Homesteader might fit the bill, but I don't own a straw hat or a mule, I'm uninterested in chewing hayseed, and I think composting toilets are kind of gross. Handyman is closer, but I don't actually work for other people much anymore. Jack-of-all-trades certainly covers the

bases, but to make it completely accurate, I'd have to learn how to install elevators, and that could get tricky out here. Maybe I'm just a plain old rancher.



Dunhill Ranch Headquarters

Jessica's Desert Garden

Living as we do, in a "food desert" (except for beef and lamb!) fresh vegetables are a rarity. Sadly, it's pretty hard to grow them here. We have little shade, high winds, and a growing season that starts in June and ends in September. Add to these difficulties the inevitable summer hailstorms, and occasional grasshopper invasions. In the past we have been rather haphazard about this, just planting whatever plants were available at the local store, watering, and hoping for the best.

This year, Jessica decided to get a little more organized about the garden and spent a lot of time at the University of YouTube and consulting with neighbors on what would grow best and how to adapt standard gardening techniques to our particular environment.

Jessica decided to focus on tomatoes and spring greens, figuring that if she could get this right, she could add more plants next year.

In order to help with the short growing season, Jessica started the tomato plants in March indoors under grow-lights. In the meantime, she added lots of poop and mulch (made from our own sheep and cedar trees!) to the garden beds.

One of the problems with growing spring greens in a desert is that outside temperatures go from freezing to broiling in about a week at the end of May. The spring greens were planted in April in a raised bed garden on the North side of our house. Jessica planted a mesclun mix and our neighbor C. Blaylock donated some arugula, bok choy, and mustard plant starts. We also planted a few green onion transplants that he gave us. With a good bed of mulch, we hoped for enough warmth to survive freezing, and enough shade to prevent the greens from cooking.

We had good spring rains, and lots of clouds, and most of the greens flourished except for a few plants that were nabbed by our resident flock of barn swallows.



Arugula, Bok Choy, and Onions, Oh My!

As for the tomatoes, they grew well indoors and were much larger than the plants that we usually bought. Jessica's "research" indicated that soil temperature and deep root structure are almost as important to tomatoes as sunshine, so paradoxically, we waited until the second week of June to plant the tomatoes outside, after a few days of "hardening". They

have trellises to grow on, made from cattle panels that I donated to the cause.



Are we Ready for the Great Outdoors?

It is still early days – with the tomatoes planted but with wire cages around them to protect them from the birds – however, we are hopeful that they will start climbing the trellises soon.

If all of this works, maybe we'll branch out into selling tomatoes at the farmers' market!



You Bet We Are!

Finn Gets the Last Word

Hi there! This is the first time that The Rancher has let me write for the newsletter. He always claimed that no one could read anything typed with paws, but that just shows to go you what he knows – Nothing! No one needs to type these days. The new iPhone thought recognition App is just what every working dog has been waiting

for! Just think something, and the App puts it down in words.

So, this Blake dog. Ok, he's got some curb appeal, and can fool people into thinking he's well trained, but let me tell you, he's still got a lot of learning to do. I try to give him some pointers, but listening is not his strong suit.

He also doesn't get relaxation. Work is work, resting is work, play is work. He just doesn't understand lazing around in the sunshine watching The Rancher do all the jobs.

Still, he's amusing to have around. He's got a funny way of looking when The Rancher says something dumb; cracks me up, but I'm not sure The Rancher notices.

It is really nice to have a buddy to play with, even if he is a bit dim. Maybe one day we can even work together. Would cut the amount of running around I have to do in half.

Well, that's all I have for now. Hope you have a great summer. It's my favorite time of year!



Finn Says: Blake Can be a Pain, but He's Alright, Really