

Five Oaks Beef

Five Oaks Family Farm Monthly Newsletter

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On The Farm...

It seems like each of the last few years has been hotter than the one before! I'm not sure whether or not that is actually true or it just seems hotter because I'm another year older and my body is just a little less tolerant of the heat ☺. Either way, working around the farm is tough when the temperatures are in the 90's! We do try to schedule the more physically demanding work for the morning hours and paperwork and inside chores for the afternoon.

During winter, the pattern is reversed and we try to schedule outside work during the afternoons when the temperatures are a little warmer.

It's interesting to note how significantly a person's life, on a working farm, synchronizes with the seasons and nature in general.

That notwithstanding, fences need to be fixed when fences need to be

fixed. Watering systems for livestock need to be maintained and repaired and cattle need to be rotated from pasture to pasture. We rotate our cattle among pastures frequently in the summer because the growth of our most prevalent pasture grass, tall fescue, slows almost to the stage of dormancy in the summer. Tall fescue is called a 'cool-season' grass and grows most vigorously in the spring and fall, slowing dramatically in the heat of the summer.



Warren County Farmers Market...

This time of year, most Saturday mornings find us selling Five Oaks Beef at the Warren County Farmers Market in downtown Warrenton. The market is located in the BB&T parking lot on the corner of Bragg Street and Macon Street. It's a small,

but growing market and a great place to begin your weekly meal planning! The market is well-managed and is open, rain or shine, every Saturday morning from 8:00 am to noon, during the summer months.

At least in my experience, this Farmers Market is unique in that all the products sold must be produced right here in the county, by local farmers and crafts people. This means that when you buy a beautiful red tomato or golden ear of corn, you can be sure that it was grown here by one of your neighbors, not purchased the day before at the Raleigh Farmers Market just to be re-sold here!

For those of you who have not sold at a Farmers Market, I can assure you that it is a very different experience! It's retail for sure, but not in any conventional way wherein a vendor locates an inexpensive source of his or her product, marks it up to a price he or she believes the market will bear and sells it to strangers that he or she



may never see again.

What it is about is a grower or producer laboring in the heat of the sun or the cold of the winter, spending long hours to produce a tomato or a steak that is the best it can be! It's a vendor doing everything they possibly can to insure that the product is safe, healthy and delicious. It's about standing eye to eye with a neighbor, selling your product at a fair price. It's much more than just a retail transaction!

Five Oaks Beef is BQA Certified...

Some of you may not be aware that Five Oaks Beef is Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified! We just realized the other day that we don't often mention the certification in our promotional material, but it is a pretty big deal. The certification is issued by a producer funded organization, whose mission is to assure high levels of consumer confidence in the beef products they purchase. The BQA program, and ultimate certification require a beef producer, such as Five Oaks Beef, to demonstrate a significant knowledge and understanding of herd health management, record keeping and food safety practices. Five Oaks Beef is "Beef You Can Trust!"

How Fresh Is Beef In The Supermarket...

Well, it's nearly impossible to tell, according to an interesting article in 'The Healthy Home Economist' (see [article here](#)).



The article asks the question,

"Have you ever wondered why supermarket meat always looks so fresh?". The answer, it seems is that as much as 70% of the beef in supermarkets has been treated with Carbon Monoxide to keep the beef a deceptively red color! Treating the beef with Carbon Monoxide is a process that is euphemistically called MAP (modified atmosphere processing) which causes the Carbon Monoxide to combine with the myoglobin, naturally present in the beef, which will keep the beef looking bright red and fresh for up to a year.

Well, there is certainly nothing wrong with a company wanting the best possible appearance for their product. Clearly, products that look good will sell more readily than products that don't. The issue I have is that when buying fresh or frozen food, what the product looks like is not just a matter of the aesthetics. We rely on the look of food to judge freshness. MAP'ing beef causes the beef to 'look' fresh until long after it may have spoiled!

Breeding Season At Five Oaks Farm...

Breeding season is upon us and in full swing and hormones are in no short supply here on the farm! 😊

We are now experiencing what could only be called 'perfect storm' of potential fence destruction. On one side of a pasture fence we have about 12 mostly mature cows ready to breed, with some heifers who are now of age to breed with a registered black Angus bull who is ready, willing and quite interested in 'assisting' with the breeding process weighing in at about 1600 pounds!

On the other side of the fence we have yearling steer calves and yearling heifer calves who are not only capable of being bred but eager to breed, but are still too young.

As if all that wasn't enough of a challenge, on this side of the fence we also have a couple of 7 month old steer calves that are being weaned.

Now imagine 'everyone' on each side of the fence, with a total weight of about 16,000 pounds on one side and about 9,000 pounds on the other side, wanting desperately to be on the other side of the fence!

We are about one month into the three month breeding season and have already spent a lot of time on fence maintenance!

Did You Know...

Cattle have reproductive systems that are quite similar to those of other mammals and not altogether unlike women.

Cows/heifers have a much narrower window, however, in which they can conceive. In women, the window is about 6 days during each menstrual cycle. With cows/heifers the window is only about 15 hours and is referred to as 'standing heat'.

Most women prefer to give birth with medical assistance, at least available, whereas cows/heifers give birth, most of the time, without requiring any assistance at all. In fact, they prefer to leave the herd and be alone during parturition (delivery).

A cow, having already calved before will require assistance, on average, only about 2.5% of the time. A heifer having her first calf will require assistance, on average 7.5% of the time, making her 3 times more likely to require assistance!

Five Oaks Recipe Of The Month...

First, we hope you enjoy our monthly newsletter and we always welcome suggestions for new content. The most frequent request recently has been to include a 'recipe' section and... here it is!

Five Oaks Beef Pot Roast

1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
1 pot roast (3-4 pounds)
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cups beef stock or water
1 large onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 bay leaves
2 teaspoons dried parsley flakes
1/8 teaspoon thyme, dried
All purpose flour

3 medium potatoes, peeled and chunked
4 medium carrots, peeled and chunked

Directions

Preheat oven to 325°. Combine first four ingredients, rub onto roast. Dust roast lightly with flour and brown the roast on both sides in the olive oil on medium high heat in a dutch oven on the stove top. Add stock or water, onion, garlic, bay leaves, parsley and thyme. Cover and roast at 325° for 2 to 2 ½ hours. During the last 20 minutes or so of roasting, add the potatoes and carrots.



When done, remove from oven and discard the bay leaves. Remove the pot roast, potatoes and carrots to a dish and thicken the cooking liquid with a mixture of flour and water to make a thin gravy. Return the pot roast and vegetables to the dutch oven and serve.

Beef you can trust!