

Building Meat Infrastructure

Posted on Sat, November 22, 2008 by Jerusha

As we've mentioned here on the blog before, one of the main obstacles for sustainable small to mid scale meat producers in this country right now is a lack of infrastructure to help them get their meat to customers. Gone are the smaller, more localized meat processing facilities of old, meaning producers are having to travel extremely far (using costly gas and stressing their animals). Some, like Will Harris of [White Oak Pastures Cattle Ranch](#), near Atlanta, actually have facilities nearby that are too *small* for them (mid-sized facilities are extremely hard to come by).



Harris, and some others—such as [Stan Schutte](#) (and his son Ryan, a Terra Madre 2008 delegate) in Central Illinois, are taking matters into their own hands by [building facilities right on their own properties](#). Harris' facility opened this past spring and last month Slow Food members in Atlanta went out to spend time at his farm and see the new facility.

Slow Food Regional Governor Julie Schaffer reports:

On Sat., Oct. 4th, people from Georgia, Florida and Alabama gathered at White Oak Pastures Cattle Ranch in Bluffton, GA for a meat summit sponsored by Florida A&M University, Georgia Organics and Slow Food Atlanta. Jennifer Taylor, from FAMU's Small Farm Program, organized the event for small meat farmers all over the southeast, as part of their outreach program. There were several speakers including Will Harris, owner of White Oak Pastures, Suzanne Welander from Georgia Organics, and myself (from Slow Food Atlanta and Emory University). Attendees discussed problems common to all small meat farmers, and shared success stories. It was a great opportunity for networking, and learning from one another. Processing issues seemed to be a stumbling block for many of the producers, and Will shared his story about how a dream to have an on-site processing facility became a reality. We toured the processing facility and enjoyed a delicious lunch of chili, stew and cornbread provided by Avalon Catering in Atlanta. I think people left the meeting with some great new ideas about how to grow their businesses, and grateful for the opportunity to share stories and discuss issues.