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Celebrating Local Foods & Flavors of Greater Atlanta and North Georgia, Season by Season

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## *Burgers*

Blueberries  
Summertime Picnics  
Reunions

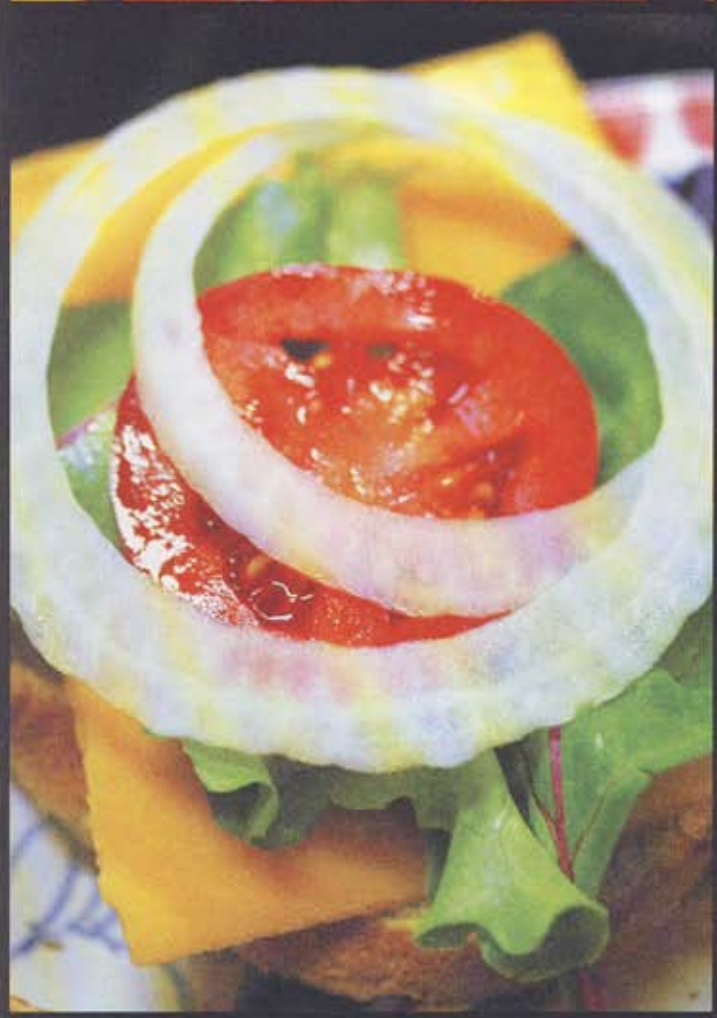
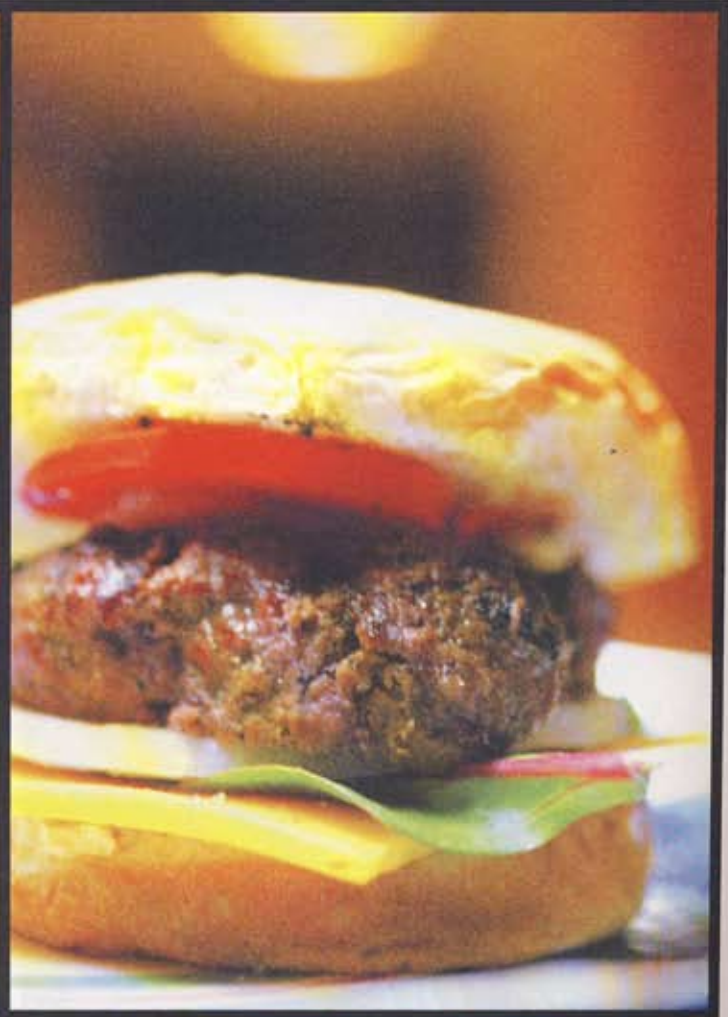


Member of Edible Communities



# G.F.B.

BY AMELIA PANE SCHAFFNER  
PHOTOS BY AMELIA PANE SCHAFFNER



If you have not heard the term yet, it means **Grass-Fed Beef**. But in my mind it also stands for **Good-for-you** (and the environment, and the farmers, and the animals) and **Far Better** than factory beef. And of course, **Great For Burgers!!!**

So what is GFB? It's one of the latest buzzwords in the ever-growing sustainable food movement. It's meant to remind us that cows are ruminants born to be free and eat grass ... not to be locked up and eat hard-to-digest corn and soy that makes them fat and lazy.

So I chose to talk about G.F.B. now, the time of blue skies and warm (oh, well—hot, muggy, humid) weather that marks the return of outdoor eating and grilling. Yes, summer is here!!! And we are finally ready to enjoy that all-American staple that is a grilled beef burger. But this summer, as we get ready for our grill-outs, let us try looking for sustainably raised, Grass-Fed Beef. Not only is it healthier, being lower in fat and higher in omega-3, CLA (conjugated linoleic acid, another good-for-you fat) and vitamin E, it also is meat from a cow that had a far better life than its feedlot cousin. A healthier, happier cow is a healthier, happier human is a healthier, happier planet. Don't we all want to be healthier and happier?

Nina Planck, who wrote *Real Food*, says that "You are what [animals] eat." Eating grass-fed beef can help reduce risks of a number of diseases like obesity, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease because GFB meat, which has as much as six times less fat than grain-fed cattle, is naturally lower in fat and calories. Unfortunately, about 85% of the beef in the United States is grain-fed so it is sometimes difficult to find grass-fed beef locally. Fortunately, many grocery stores are starting to carry it, such as Whole Foods and Publix: You just have to ask.

I researched this topic in depth and spoke with numerous farmers, providers, chefs and restaurant owners and they all agreed on one point: We are what we eat and we should eat with that in mind. Consumers, you and me, should avoid choosing unhealthy, inhumanely and unsustainably raised beef. Make sure you ask your provider and restaurants you eat at the provenance of their beef and request GFB. The more people request it, the better the chances that more farmers will produce it.

There is a growing trend in the food industry that seems to be leading to a Copernican revolution. There is a hope that cost will no longer be at the center of our "universe" but quality will be—that is, based on the ability to afford the choice. By raising awareness on what we eat and where it comes from we start to own this shift. Michael Pollan in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, states: "Eating is an agricultural act," as Wendell Berry famously said. It is also an ecological act, and a political act, too. Though much has been done to obscure this simple fact, how and what we eat determines to a great extent the use we make of the world—and what is to become of it."

The interesting thing is that once the shift from cost to quality happens, the benefits will start affecting our whole world and the way

we sustain it ... potentially even decreasing the "cost" of our food. "The price of meat would double or triple if full ecological costs—including fossil fuel use, groundwater depletion and agricultural-chemical pollution—were factored in," according to EarthSave.

I have to admit ... at times, doing this research, I have felt definitively "over-informed" but I know I will slowly "digest" all the information and what will stay with me is the fact that GFB is better. Period. Unfortunately almost all beef found in your common grocery stores comes from animals raised in confinement in large facilities, fed a diet high in grain (which causes the animal to fatten up quickly) and fed a constant low-level dose of antibiotics to prevent disease. That is no way to live: Grains are not the natural diet for cows (they are ruminants!), drugs and antibiotics pass on to us humans and living in "confined facilities" (a.k.a. cages) is inhumane. Fortunately, a few pioneering farmers are doing "pasture-based" farming and raising their beef on grass, rather than grain. Also, many restaurateurs are now asking their providers for GFB with the understanding that it tastes better and it is a better social, environmental and civic choice.

### What the farmers have to say

Will Harris of **White Oak Pastures** is a true character. You could say he started the GFB trend in Georgia. To get a sense of where his passion and drive come from you have watch the video on the farm's home page. He is tremendously invested in creating awareness around humanely treated cows and is involved with the American Grass-Fed Association. We had a long talk and discussed things as big as the future of the world. He is a one-man-mission trying to generate the understanding that the true price we pay when purchasing meat is not the sticker price but the life-time price, one that translates into our well-being, the well-being of the animals and ultimately of our world. He recounted the story of how he started in the GFB business after seeing how poorly "commercial" animals were treated and transported. He truly is a pioneer in Georgia and everyone in the business knows him and loves him. Much of the popularity of GFB in Georgia is because Will has worked hard to educate restaurateurs and consumers. ★

**Riverview Farms** is a family-run farm just an hour north of Atlanta. The Swancys have a hands-on approach and invest a lot of energy in the farm and in educating their customers with their natural savoir-faire, all the way from farming to selling directly at restaurants and farmers markets. Carter and Beverly Swancy purchased the original 10-acre farm in 1975. The farm really started changing towards what it has become today when their son Wes, together with wife, Charlotte, whom he met while studying chemistry at the University of Georgia, convinced them to enter into the organic market. Today the farm is 180 acres. They do not like using fertilizers and pesticides. Charlotte says: "I am passionate about grass-fed beef because nature intended for the cow to eat grass. I also feel strongly about people knowing where their food comes from and how it was raised from start to finish. This traceability enables the eaters to make a conscious decision to eat healthier and support small farms. Our farm is not

complete without the animals." The Swancys' passion is contagious to those who know them. Charlotte adds: "People are hungry for a choice in the meats that they eat. They want to eat foods that are good for them, good for the animals and good for the land. The grass-fed beef movement is growing. It is very encouraging to watch new eaters getting excited about the flavorful steak or roast they ate from our cows. The cows have a happy, complete life full of green grass."

**Fowler Farms** is a ninth generation farm in Athens offering grass-fed beef, in addition to pastured pork. It was started way back when in 1818. Fowler Farms is part of the Moonshine Meat Cooperative, which provides grass-fed beef to Farm 255 (Athens), Farm Burger (Decatur) and the Moonshine Meats CSA Program. They vow to employ the principles of intensive rotational grazing, holistic management and wise animal husbandry. Brad and Alana Fowler follow the vision of their ancestor, Cody Fowler, who founded the farm two centuries ago: "wise land stewardship in an effort to feed our family and community healthy, safe and humanely raised meat."

Erwenda "Tink" Wade from the 230-acre **Lucky7W Farm** in Washington is a fourth-generation cattle woman with hundreds of years of knowledge that has been passed down through the generations and personal experience packed into a tiny 5-foot-2 frame. She created what she calls "a happy cow paradise." Tink's great-grandfather started farming back in the 1800s and he believed in raising cattle the natural way—which happened to be the only way back then! Tink Wade says: "Grass-fed is the right thing to do, for the earth, for the animal and most of all for you the consumer." When I spoke with Tink she spoke with passion about how cows are designed to eat grass and live the way "God intended it to be."

Bill Hodge started **Hodge Ranch** in Carrollton in 1973. He believes that the "key to profitability is not increased production, but rather a decrease in cost per unit of production" and that "it is best to raise cattle the way nature intended." They are a sustainable livestock operation "working in harmony with Mother Nature."

Beverly Ann and Brett Chyatte started **onlyGrassfed.com** with three main principles in mind: respect for animals, respect for the environment and "that true health comes from nutrition." Brett works for a Fortune 500 company but outside of work he is passionate about spreading the word on grass-fed beef. When I spoke with him, he said that "The average consumer has been conditioned to accept gas packing, grain feeding and industrial farming as the norm. They have become accustomed to buying cheap, mass-produced beef that is incredibly unhealthy. And as long as consumers keep buying cheap beef, nothing is going to change. But thanks to people like Michael Pollan, people are starting to wake up and take notice. Pasture-raised beef that is properly aged and prepared is superior to the current status quo. Raising animals in pasture from beginning to end is a more natural process, which is better for the animal, the environment and the consumer. Make your voice heard, vote with your wallet, choose local, pasture-raised grass fed-beef." It's fantastic to see his dedication. Take a

look at the directory of GFB providers and restaurants on his site and add yourself if you are one.

## What the restaurants have to say

Each night around 9:30 at **Holeman & Finch Public House** "it's burger time!": 24 (yes, just 24!) hand-crafted, perfectly done, double-patty cheeseburgers are assembled on house-made buns and served alongside hand-cut fries and homemade ketchup, mustard and pickles. This idea was born from the vision of Linton Hopkins to pay the proper respect to this iconic American food. Hurry up and line-up: They sell out fast!

The latest restaurant to open following the craze for "boutique," casual, and socially responsible burgers is **Yeah! Burger**, born from the vision of owners talented chef Shaun Doty and entrepreneur Erik Maier. They are committed to serve real, all-natural and sustainable ingredients. "We want guests to truly feel good about what they're eating at YEAH! BURGER, so we're using superior-quality ingredients and responsible environmental practices as the foundation for our restaurant," says Maier. Their burgers are customizable, built-to-order, made with White Oak Pastures grass-fed beef. They definitively have a special "Yeah!" sauce!

The idea behind **Farm Burger** in Decatur is to introduce metro Atlanta to an ethical and economical version of America's favorite sandwich, made from 100% grass-fed beef. Their beef is locally sourced from Athens farms as well as other Southeastern grass-fed ranchers and growers and is from cows that are never fed hormones, antibiotics or grain, dry-aged and ground fresh on-site, mostly coming from Full Moon Farms and Moonshine Meats.

Chef Dave at **5 Seasons Brewery** was one of the first to source grass-fed beef in town about 10 years ago. He sources from a variety of farmers, each with their own unique character and seasonality. When asked to summarize in one sentence why he uses GFB, Dave says: "Use your head, eat grass-fed!" The best part of eating your grass-fed burger at 5 Seasons is that you get to match it with a fresh house-brewed beer.

At **Muss & Turner's** in Smyrna they provide their staff with extended documentation about the benefits of G.F.B.; that tells you how passionate they are about educating their customers. When you go, you have to try "THE Burger": a perfectly grilled Riverview Farms grass-fed beef burger with roasted poblano pepper, melted Cabot cheddar, red onion and house-made cilantro mayo on a challah bun. Need I say more?

At **Rosebud**, a neighborhood gathering spot in Virginia Highlands, you can start your evening listening to good music, drinking a cold beer and eating Riverview Farms slider burgers as an appetizer. Chef-owner Ron Eyster's mantra is "buy local"; you know you are in good hands.

At **Bocado**, Chef Todd Ginsberg's farm-to-fork principles translate into the sourcing of local and fresh ingredients, including lean and

tender grass-fed beef for his burgers that comes local farmers. It's served between buttered bread, American cheese and homemade pickles. D-lish!

## Cooking GFB at home

Grass-fed beef is much leaner than conventional grain-fed beef, but far superior in flavor and a lot more tender. The trick, though, is correct cooking technique. Here a handful of useful tips: 1) add a touch of extra fat; 2) lower the cooking temperature of your grill by at least 50 degrees; 3) do not overcook it (for medium-rare, reach at most 125° F); 4) let it rest, tented, before serving.

When making grass-fed burgers at home there is no need to marinate but a touch of bacon (or pancetta) might be nice flavor addition, just make sure you do not overcook to keep them juicy. You might consider cooking them on the second tier of the grill so they aren't sitting directly on top of the flames. James Beard's recommendation of adding a tablespoon or two of heavy cream and a hefty shot of grated onions (I even quickly sautéed my onions in olive oil for best flavor) to a pound of ground beef seems perfect for GFB burgers since it delivers extra moisture.

A GFB burger will be full-flavored, clean-tasting, beefy (as beef should be!!!) and richer in omega-3, rather than greasy, drippy, grainy and chemically loaded like a supermarket ground chuck burger! Just add your favorite toppings.

If you want to learn more culinary, health, environmental and animal welfare benefits of pasture-based farming, I recommend *The Grass Fed Gourmet Cookbook* by Shannon Hayes, Cornell professor of sustainable agriculture and community development.

## In closing

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."—Mohandas Gandhi

This summer (and for the future) let's all make an extra effort to look for grass-fed beef at the markets and restaurants. Use the following checklist when sourcing beef: Humanely raised, humanely harvested, not grain-fed, no animal byproducts, no GMOs, no added hormones, no antibiotics, no pesticides on pastures. You can visit either <http://onlygrassfed.com> or [www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org) to find a farm, restaurant or store near you that offers sustainably raised, pastured beef. eMM

100 percent Italian, Amelia Pane Schaffner has lived in Atlanta for 12 years. She has a food blog ([www.ztastylife.com](http://www.ztastylife.com)), loves to take photos ([www.ameliaps.com](http://www.ameliaps.com)), writes a lot (poetry and freelance articles), spends her leisure time with husband and two kids either outdoors or in the kitchen.

## GFB Resources

### Education:

[onlygrassfed.com](http://onlygrassfed.com)  
[eatwellguide.org](http://eatwellguide.org)  
[animalwelfareapproved.org](http://animalwelfareapproved.org)  
[americangrassfed.org](http://americangrassfed.org)  
[eatwild.com](http://eatwild.com)  
[mercola.com/beef/benefits.htm](http://mercola.com/beef/benefits.htm)

### Farmers (alphabetical):

**Fowler Farms:** [fowlerfamilyfarms.com](http://fowlerfamilyfarms.com) (Brad and Alana Fowler)  
**Gryffon's Aerie Farm:** [gryffonsaerie.com](http://gryffonsaerie.com) (Ramona Huff)  
**Hodge Ranch:** [hodgeranch.com](http://hodgeranch.com) (Bill & Di Hodge)  
**Hunter Cattle:** [huntercattle.com](http://huntercattle.com) (Del Ferguson)  
**Lucky7W Farm:** [tinksbeef.com](http://tinksbeef.com) (Etwenda "Tink" Wade)  
**Riverview Farms:** [grassfedcow.com](http://grassfedcow.com) (the Swancy family)  
**Sequatchie Cove Farm:** [sequatchiecovefarm.com](http://sequatchiecovefarm.com) (Bill Keener)  
★ **White Oak Pastures:** [whiteoakpastures.com](http://whiteoakpastures.com) (Will Harris)

### Suppliers (alphabetical):

Buckhead Beef: [buckheadbeef.com](http://buckheadbeef.com) (owned by Sysco)  
Costco: GFB from Verde Farms [verdefarms.com](http://verdefarms.com)  
Destiny organics: [destiny-organics.com](http://destiny-organics.com) (Dee Dee Dfgby)  
Full Moon Coop and Moonshine Meats CSA:  
[fullmooncoop.org](http://fullmooncoop.org) (Jason Mann)  
Publix [publix.com](http://publix.com)  
Sawicki's Meat Seafood and More (Decatur): Sells prepared foods as well as locally sourced GFB meat. [sawickisfoods.com](http://sawickisfoods.com)  
Whole Foods: [wholefoodsmarket.com](http://wholefoodsmarket.com)

### Restaurants where you can get a mean GFB burger (alphabetical):

**5 Seasons Brewing Company:** [5seasonsbrewing.com](http://5seasonsbrewing.com)—burger meat sourced from White Oak  
**Atkins Park:** [atkinspark.com](http://atkinspark.com)—GFB burger sourced from White Oak  
**Bocado:** [bocadoatlanta.com](http://bocadoatlanta.com)  
**Farm 255 (Athens):** [farm255.com](http://farm255.com)  
**Farmburger (Decatur):** [farmburger.net](http://farmburger.net)—They get their beef from Fowler Farms.  
**Flip Burger Boutique:** [flipburgerboutique.com](http://flipburgerboutique.com)  
**Holeman and Finch:** [holeman-finch.com](http://holeman-finch.com)  
**Leon's Full Service:** [leonsfullservice.com](http://leonsfullservice.com)  
**Midway Pub:** [themidwaypub.com](http://themidwaypub.com)  
**Muss & Turner's (Smyrna):** [mussandturners.com](http://mussandturners.com)  
**Ormsby's:** [ormsbysatlanta.com](http://ormsbysatlanta.com)  
**Parker's on Ponce:** [parkersonponce.com](http://parkersonponce.com)—offers Tink's grass-fed beef  
**Rosebud:** [rosebudatlanta.com](http://rosebudatlanta.com)  
**Yeah! Burger:** [yeahburger.com](http://yeahburger.com)—burger meat sourced from White Oak