

## Local Beef -- any way but ground?

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Source: <http://foodandbrewlove.blogspot.com/2007/02/local-beef-any-way-but-ground.html>

I've started a quest for local beef. My starting points: White Oak Pastures and KBH , both local farmers of all-natural grass-fed cows, supply ground beef to New Leaf Market. Each farm's ground beef tastes distinctly different from the other, but what I've *really* noticed is how different grass-fed beef tastes from my supermarket's beef. I bought an attractive flat-iron steak from Publix; it was a pretty cut with fairly good marbling, it looked promising. Indeed, if I'd not experienced grass-fed beef, I would have enjoyed my prize. It was tender, juicy, and had a mild beef flavor...

Mild? A "mild beef flavor" is my best description; it was thin and transparent. Over the few months that I've committed myself to an almost-weekly purchase of local grass-fed beef, I've grown quite accustomed to the assertive, grassy, big-beef flavors of grass-fed beef. *I have to admit that when I first tried the grass-fed beef, I was almost put off by the flavor, because it was so different -- big, earthy, almost gamey. It grew on me quickly, though. I was excited by the nuance of flavor that I was suddenly able to discern* when I compared the White Oak Pastures and KBH beef -- each unique (I'll probably write about this in a future post). I was stunned by how hard the enlightenment hit me at that moment. This sudden awakening to *a lack of flavor* in what I had been eating quite happily just months before, shook me more than the evocative, earth-bound flavors of our local grass-fed beef as it left its first indelible impression on me.

I have to go back to the flavorless cut for a minute. It made me think about the cow, the living creature it came from. This was one of those "OH WOW, OH NO" moments that made me wonder if I'd ever be able to turn back: The cow fed a diet of grain and corn (remember the mild, thin, transparent flavor?) Hormones and antibiotics were administered as a matter of course, to counter the disastrous effects of the rumen-incompatible feed and cramped living conditions. It was raised in the confinement of a cramped barn packed with cows. You're getting the picture, but please read up with me: I've included some links. We'll make informed decisions about what we eat.

**A note on marbling:** I still love highly marbled beef -- it is delicious! I was dismayed to read that the marbling is due in large part to grain/corn feeding (which has a terribly deleterious effect on the digestive health of the cow, which necessitates the routine use of antibiotics etc -- please read up on this, -- the professionals explain the complex problem in a way that I cannot). At some future date, I'll foray into the world of Kobe beef, which I absolutely love.

**Local Beef: Any way but ground?** There are occasional opportunities to purchase whole or half carcasses from local farmers, offered by one group or another of interested individuals who agree to purchase the beast together, butcher it, and divvy it up. Usually the group is small, so that one would need lots of freezer space in order to participate. Anyone who knows us knows that the space in our three refrigerator/freezers is already committed to our favorite food -- beer. There must be another way....

**Do you know where one can get smaller cuts of local grass-fed beef (primal cuts would be fine)?**

**I'm also curious to know how many people are interested in getting whole cuts (rather than ground) -- if more people were interested, it would be easier to commit to the purchase of a quarter, half, or whole cow. Are you interested? Committed? Both? Neither?**

Read Up on grass-fed beef (and related links):

**[Eat Wild \(grassfed basics\)](#)**

**[Michael Pollan \(educator, author of Omnivore's Dilemma\)](#)**

**[John Robbins \(vegetarian perspective\)](#)**

**[Local Sources for Grass-fed Beef \(via Slow Food Site\)](#)**

**The Meatrix (Educational and Entertaining online film)**  
**Wellfed.net (article and great collective foodie blog)**

Posted by Food and Brew Love at [1:49 PM](#) \_

Labels: [Farmers](#), [Meat](#), [Slow Food](#)

3 comments:

[Jim Fiedler](#) said...

I am glad you are buying local and buying from our good friend Will Harris at White Oak. He is on the board of the American Grassfed Association along with my wife. He is a real gentleman and raises a first class product. The taste of grassfed beef certainly is distinctive and habit forming. Our customers here in Southern Indiana love the taste of our grassfed beef. Wait until you taste some pastured pork. It isn't completely grassfed but it isn't the 'other white meat' either! Keep buying local!

Jim Fiedler  
Fiedler Family Farms

[March 4, 2007 8:30 PM](#)

[Food and Brew Love](#) said...

Jim,  
Thank you for finding us, and thank you for your comment! It's amazing how people are connected.

I've had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Harris once, at Sweetgrass Dairy during one of Sweetgrass's "Market days." I can't describe how much the simple act of meeting the people whose products I am feeding to my family has impacted my buying habits. Knowing the farmers and their farming practices assures me that I am nourishing my family in the best way possible.

I look forward to trying some pastured pork soon.

[March 4, 2007 9:09 PM](#)

[Food and Brew Love](#) said...

NEWS! Kurtz and Sons' beef is available at New Leaf Market(ribeyes, T-Bones, and sirloin steaks -- cryo/frozen). This is a local producer of chemical-free, grass-fed beef whose steaks cost only \$1 per pound more than the non-local brands at New Leaf.

I was unfamiliar with Kurtz and Sons, but apparently they gave a talk at O'Toole's Herb Farm's Just Because Festival.

I took a ribeye home for a special treat. I look forward to sharing.

Anyone care to share some info or thoughts about Kurtz and Sons Dairy?

[March 9, 2007 9:01 PM](#)