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## Food

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### Rethinking meat: Eating humanely raised animals goes more mainstream

By Cindy Sutter Camera Food Editor  
Tuesday, September 4, 2007

Waylon Lewis became a vegetarian about five years ago. It made the household run a little easier, since his girlfriend didn't eat meat.

"We were splitting up pots, so I could cook my bacon and sausage," he says of the time before he made the switch. Lewis, editor of Elephant magazine, admits he had a few periods in his life when his eating habits were less than mindful — chain restaurant pizza and college went together all too well — but he even as a child he was conscious of where his food came from. Growing up in a Buddhist family in Boulder, his mother got eggs from a nearby house on Mapleton that had a chicken coop, for example.

Lewis calls his transition to vegetarianism "seamless." He has considered becoming a vegan, because he worries about what terms such as "free range" and "cage free" really mean when he's buying eggs. Or how dairy cattle, even those raised on organic farms, are treated.

The treatment of farm animals is an issue that's no longer on the fringe. Burger King announced this year that it would begin a transition to cage-free eggs and chicken. Celebrity Chef Wolfgang Puck announced he would serve humanely raised meats and poultry. Several local restaurants such as the Kitchen and Frasca Food and Wine list the farms that produce their pork and eggs, giving customers the chance to check out the farms on their individual Web sites. Earlier this month at Frasca, Chef Lachlan Mackinnon-Patterson served meat from a calf raised by his wife's parents on their ranch in Oklahoma.

Options for home cooks have also expanded here with the availability of grass-fed beef, and Colorado-raised pork and chickens at the Boulder County Farmers' Market and Longmont Farmers' Market, as well as meats labeled "Certified Humane Raised and Handled" at natural foods stores, mainstream grocers and even warehouse clubs.

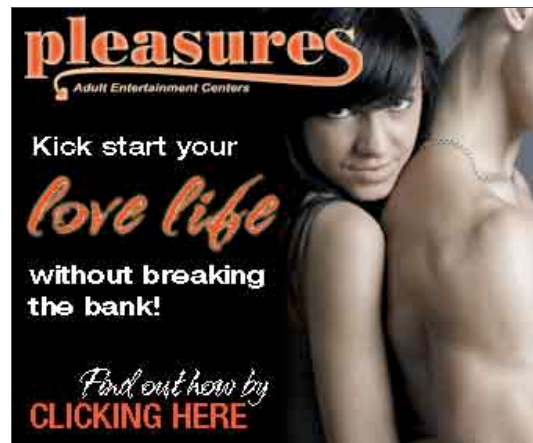
#### Ethical questions

These converging trends have led to what some see as a third way in the once sharp divide between meat eaters and vegetarians: eating animals that have lived a good life up until slaughter on a farm that uses sustainable practices. It's an approach popularized by Michael Pollan in the widely read "The Omnivore's Dilemma." No less a culinary personage than Mollie Katzen, author of the iconic "Moosewood" cookbook, which helped usher in accessible vegetarianism when it was first published in 1977, says she now sometimes eats sustainably raised meat, although she still writes vegetarian cookbooks and respects vegetarians.

It's a path many vegetarians would still find abhorrent, since even a content farm animal must still be killed to put meat on the table. Lewis, for example, says he doesn't plan to eat meat again. But for those who do eat meat, the opportunity to be aware of the way in which their food was once treated offers a way out of the don't ask, don't tell approach to consuming an animal.

#### Humane standards

It was this different way of eating that was favored by Adele Douglass, when she founded



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Humane Farm Animal Care in Virginia. The organization inspects farms and lists them as "Certified Humane Raised and Handled," a term which the group trademarked, if the farming practices meet the group's criteria, which are based on input from animal behaviorists and scientific studies.

Douglass explains it like this:

"I would like to see that the animals are allowed to express normal behaviors like walking, turning around, flapping wings — that's what birds do — rooting around in the ground — that's what pigs do," she says. "I started this group, because I'm not a vegetarian. A lot of people like meat, but they don't like to think their animals are tortured for the short time they're alive."

The number of animals covered by the program has grown from 143,000 in 2003 when the group started with five farms to about 18 million animals today.

But what does humane treatment mean?

For farms receiving certification from Douglass' group, the criteria are very specific as outlined on the group's Web site, [www.certifiedhumane.com](http://www.certifiedhumane.com). Only one farm in Colorado, Denver-based Maverick Ranch Natural Meats has received certification. Mark Menagh, manager of the Boulder County Farmers' Market, says many smaller farms have not sought humane certification, because their customers haven't demanded it. He says the personal relationship that market buyers have with farmers makes certification less necessary.

"A consumer can go and look a farmer in the eye and ask how (the animal) is raised," he says. "When (farmers) sell consumer packaged goods ... once or twice removed from the farmer, that's when you need labeling, to make consumers know that it's been handled humanely when they go in grocery store."

For those negotiating the grocery aisles, terminology can be confusing.

Organic doesn't necessarily mean humane, for example, although animals are treated considerably better than those raised on industrial farms. Regulations require that the animals not be confined and that they are able to move around, for example. Some groups have claimed, however, that regulations that require "access to the outdoors" for example, have been interpreted by some large operations in ways that may not mean that animals actually use pasture land.

Likewise, humane doesn't mean organic, although the standards require that animals not be treated with hormones or sub-therapeutic antibiotics or fed food made from mammals.

The terms "cage free" and "free range" are somewhat analogous to the description "natural." Although, people assume they know what the terms mean, they are not strictly regulated.

Cage-free chickens, for example, are often raised in barns, never living outdoors. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says free-range chickens must have more space to move than factory-raised poultry and "access to the outdoors." Critics charge that some companies interpret that to mean there has to be a door on the chicken coop.

Even chickens that has been certified humane by Douglass' group, have their beaks trimmed before they are 10 days old, which Douglass' says research shows does not cause chronic pain like the debeaking practiced in industrial operations. The beak trimming prevents the chickens from injuring each other.

For consumers looking to transition to humanely raised animals, Douglass says it's best to start with chicken, including eggs, and pork, since industrial farming practices have the greatest impact on those species. Both chickens and pigs are closely confined in industrial operations, chickens with as little space as an 11 by 8½ piece of paper. Pigs are often raised in crates, where they cannot turn around or walk. Cattle still live a good part of their lives on pasture land, although feed lots can be inhumane.

### **Knowing your farmer**

At Frasca, the specially raised calf was served during one of the restaurant's Monday night tasting dinners, where it was offered as the non-vegetarian option in the prix fixe dinner. Mackinnon-Patterson called the meat veal, although the cow's life in no way resembled the factory conditions that led to a huge drop in U.S. veal consumption, after it was revealed that industrially raised veal spent their entire lives in confining crates being fed milk or formula.

Mackinnon-Patterson's in-laws, David and Susie Koontz, came to Boulder for the serving

of their animal. They plan to market their calves as pasture-fed veal. The animals stay with their mothers, nursing and also grazing occasionally if they're interested.

"This calf never had a bad day," David Koontz says.

Mackinnon-Patterson also made a commitment to use the whole animal, in a nod to sustainability.

"It takes a degree of creativity," Mackinnon-Patterson said as he sweated shallots and garlic and ground some of the meat to be used in a bolognese sauce. Other cuts were braised and served with a vinaigrette. A light stew with prosciutto added was also on the menu.

Staff passed out a flier explaining the meat's provenance.

"Everyone's into a good story, and it's a new trend in restaurants," Mackinnon-Patterson says of explaining food's origins to patrons. "Chefs could make a huge difference."

While Lewis will not be eating a calf or any other meat, he says the growing awareness of consumers can eventually make a big difference in how animals are treated and lead to a regulatory tightening of terms such as free range.

"The good news is that consumers are driving the market. Free range hardly existed five or 10 years ago," he says. "Whether the promises are being fulfilled or not, people have to keep pressing for that to be realized."

Contact Camera Staff Writer Cindy Sutter at 303-473-1335 or [sutterc@dailycamera.com](mailto:sutterc@dailycamera.com). cattle, even those raised on organic farms, are treated.

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Posted by **chucklehead** on September 5, 2007 at 9:31 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

"He has considered becoming a vegan, because he worries about what terms such as "free range" and "cage free" really mean when he's buying eggs."

Ah yes, I remember the days of the herds of yard birds roaming the range free...

Posted by **gsegiet** on September 5, 2007 at 10:01 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

I'm sure the cows will appreciate being able to graze to their hearts delight...right up to the point where we saw their necks open and rip off their flesh. "This calf never had a bad day." Nope, not until the last one. From Southpark: "Why do they call it veal?" Reply: "Because if we called it tortured baby cow, nobody would buy it."

Posted by **jmcmahan** on September 5, 2007 at 9:11 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

<b>gsegiet</b>

But when a Robin rips a living worm apart with its beak, or a majestic leopard chases and rips the neck of a gazelle into a bloody mass, or an eagle grabs a salmon in the back with it's bear talons (or I let my cat kill mice in my home rather than employing dangerous insecticides), that's just the beauty of nature?

The life cycle of this planet is filled with pain and suffering. Karma, Eve and the Apple, to whatever you want to ascribe it.

I, for one, welcome this information on how I can lessen the suffering that I (as one of trillions of carnivores mammals on this Earth) necessarily cause other creatures.

Posted by **acooney** on September 7, 2007 at 10:25 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Humans are NOT carnivores. Please read up on your biology. If you really want to lessen the suffering of animals, DON'T eat them.

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