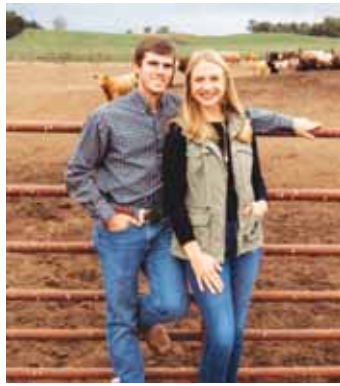


Young Ranchers Market Beef Direct To Consumers

While growing up on a Nebraska cattle farm, Hannah Klitz knew she always wanted to be involved in the beef industry. "Entering college, I planned on being a cattle embryologist, but changed my focus when, as a Beef Ambassador, I realized there was a large need to connect producers with consumers, giving those producers a "positive face," Klitz says. In 2018, as a college sophomore studying animal science and entrepreneurship, Hannah started Oak Barn Beef in a retired cattle barn on her parent's farm. She marketed her first products as premium dry-aged beef produced from her family's farm.



Eric and Hannah Klitz market beef directly to consumers from their Nebraska ranch, selling dry-aged beef to customers in all 50 states.

Knowing she'd have to learn more about direct marketing to be successful, Klitz spent the summer of 2018 on Five Mary's Ranch in California to learn about their farm-to-table operation. "That was a valuable step that helped me learn about running a farm-to-table operation, shipping a perishable product, and using social media for promotion," she says.

Changes happened quickly over the next five years. Now married to Eric and with a daughter, Hannah says Oak Barn Beef has expanded more than she could've

imagined. They ship beef to customers in all 50 states. The business recently expanded with a warehouse, freezer, and retail store at a new location in West Point, Neb.

Eric and Hannah have been around livestock their whole lives and use this experience to care for their animals in the



Oak Barn Beef recently expanded their warehouse, freezer, and retail operations.

best way possible at both of their family's farms. They have a strict protocol for cattle vaccinations, pasture the cattle with rotational grazing, and grow them out with a finishing ration carefully developed by cattle nutritionists. Hannah says their goal is to produce sustainable beef that gains rich flavor through dry aging.

All of their beef is aged in a controlled environment for 14 to 21 days after slaughter by a local USDA-inspected butcher. "This process produces a noticeable difference in taste and tenderness, where tougher connective tissues are broken down to produce tender, almost butter-soft steaks, roasts, and ground beef. Steaks can usually be cut with a fork."

Hannah says people shouldn't just take her word for their beef quality; they can read the reviews from the Oak Farm website. Nineteen

pages of positive reviews help them know they're doing things right when raising their cattle for premium beef.

Oak Barn sources beef from cattle bred and raised for premium carcass traits like tenderness, marbling, and animal size. They're also handled carefully in a low-stress environment. Never one to rest on past laurels, Hannah has also developed an online course for other entrepreneurs who want to start a farm-to-table meat business. Check the Oak Barn website for more information on the class and Oak Barn meat products.

Hannah adds, "We're very fortunate to have many helping hands for our business, with our families pitching in often to help."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Oak Barn Beef, P.O. Box 2, West Point, Neb. 68788 (www.oakbarnbeef.com).

They Help Veterans Start Farming

For the past 12 years, the Farmer Veteran Coalition has been providing a way for America's returning veterans to get into agriculture.

"When our founder, Michael O'Gorman, began the Farmer Veteran Coalition in 2008, no one was doing what we set out to do," says Natalie Moore, Communications Director for the Farmer Veteran Coalition. "He started the military-to-agriculture movement across the country."

O'Gorman started the group after reading a 2007 survey that caught him by surprise.

"The study documented the zip codes of those killed in Iraq and Afghanistan," Moore says. "It showed that a disproportionate number of our volunteer military was coming from rural America.

"That's what lit the lightbulb for Michael," she says, "and he thought maybe these men and women coming home from war could benefit from careers in farming."

The FVC services are free and available for any veteran of any era, including active military members getting ready to transition out of the service.

The organization has built a network of about 200 partners across the country that help the FVC accomplish its mission.

Moore describes the coalition as a "pool of services" whether it be for land acquisition, soils, water, and many other areas because of their connections.

"The help we provide is especially important to beginning farmers who are looking to establish themselves on the land," she says.

In addition to their multiple available resources, FVC can also put new members in touch with other farmer-veterans for help in getting their operation off the ground.

"We can put them in touch with people on the other side of the country that they otherwise wouldn't get to know and learn from," Moore says. "They can exchange ideas and challenges, share success stories, and just learn to run better operations."

The Farmer Veteran Coalition also sponsors other programs to help accomplish that task.



Farmer Veteran Coalition uses its network connections to help veterans with land acquisition, soil, water help and many other services.

The Farmer Veteran Fellowship Program is a small grant program that helps aspiring farmers get a crucial piece of equipment for their operation.

"Our other program is called the 'Homegrown by Heroes' label," Moore says. "It identifies their product in the marketplace as produced by a veteran, and it lets consumers support our veterans while they're out shopping."

Moore says veterans often return from combat zones with challenges such as PTSD. Agriculture is one occupation that can offer some healing.

"It's so therapeutic to work with the land and grow life," she says. "Many veteran farmers have told us that being in agriculture likely saved their life and gave it meaning again."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Natalie Moore, Farmer Veteran Coalition, 4614 Second Street, Suite 4, Davis, Calif. 95618 (ph 530-756-1395; Natalie@farmvetco.org); www.farmvetco.org).



Lynn Melton's shop handles catering throughout northwest Wisconsin and will cover everything from weddings to corporate events.

They Offer Custom Meats and Catering

Lynn's Custom Meats & Catering serves the Hayward, Wis., region with fresh-cut USDA Choice meats, cheeses, sausage, specialty grocery items, and various lunch foods at fair prices within a fun shopping environment.

Founder Lynn Melton got her start in the meat industry when she returned to Hayward as an adult and was hired as manager of the Farmer's Inn before working at Marketplace Foods and then the Meat Palace. Upon the Meat Palace closing, Melton started Lynn's Custom Meats in 2008 in half of the Sunflower Market. By 2010, the business had outgrown that space, and Melton moved to her current location.

Today, Lynn's Custom Meats & Catering processes everything onsite with Melton's own seasonings. This includes 11 types of summer sausage and multiple varieties of smoked sausages. It's also possible to purchase 15 flavors of meat sticks made from 100 percent natural beef. Four flavors of jerky round out the Market's snacking

selection. Grilling enthusiasts can choose from over 30 flavors of bratwurst, each of which is seasoned with natural ingredients. They range from traditional to a little on the wild side.

Pair the meat with the Market's assortment of cut and packaged hard, soft, and spreadable cheeses, many of which are handcrafted in Wisconsin. Gift boxes are also available.

Approximately one-third of Lynn's business is catering. The shop handles catering throughout northwest Wisconsin and will cover everything from weddings to corporate events. The store is also a prominent supporter of many local fundraisers, including Lion's Club Events.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lynn's Custom Meats & Catering, 15695 U.S. Hwy 63, Hayward, Wis. 54843 (ph 715-634-0751; lamelton@yahoo.com; www.lynnscustommeats.com).