

# CALIFORNIA GRASSFED BISON®

Bringing them Home!



*Bison, ancient symbol of Abundance & Prosperity.  
Today's symbol of Hope & Renewal.*

## **Welcome!**

We're excited to share news and information about the ranch, the animals and connecting more with you, our customers in this our first quarterly newsletter!

Our newsletter's goal is to strengthen the precious 3-way reconnect that has started. This reconnect includes (1) for us: the food producer and food customer, (2) for the animal, Bison as our native heritage meat source, and (3) for the earth, as we bring news from the ranch.

Part of it is written as a report. Part of it contains facts and information. And part of it is written with the specific intent of honoring the emotional, spiritual and at times mystical elements of raising bison. As our mentor Art likes to say, "Remember. They are not cattle." Indeed, they are not. There is something special about Bison and our collective relationship with them. In addition to loving the meat, many admit to feeling something, if only a faint remembering or shared feeling of homecoming that we can't quite put our finger on. We hope you agree it's important to include it.

This first issue is dedicated to you. Without you, there would be no Lindner Bison, no California Grassfed Bison, no Heritage Ranch.

We deeply appreciate your support and share your enthusiasm for more of a connection.

Sincerely, Kathy & Ken

## **THE RECONNECT FACTOR**

**FOR US, FOR THE ANIMALS & FOR THE EARTH**

### **- for us**

#### **A NEW TYPE OF CUSTOMER**

Lindner Bison is so incredibly blessed to bring this meat to you. As the first 100% grassfed meat source in Southern California farmer's markets, we've come a long way from the difficult days when animal rights extremists spit on our literature and harassed our customers.

We are still here because of you. And because of what you tell us - in person, over the phone, in emails and through your gifts and continued buying of our meat.

In addition to health related testimonials, here is just a sample of what we never get tired of hearing:

*"We appreciate what you're doing. Thank you. Grassfed bison meat is amazing. Please keep doing what you're doing. We need more people like you, humanely raising & bringing back these animals. Thank you for making this available to us. We are so grateful you are here. Please don't go away. This is all we eat now. We love grassfed bison!"*

It is because of this and more that we keep showing up when we're exhausted. The bison keep us going at the ranch - you keep us going here. Without you, though, there would be no reason for us to work so hard to raise these animals.

So just who are you?

Not surprisingly, you are from every walk of life imaginable. Some are corporate workers the way we were. Some are retired, semi-retired or unemployed, on a limited income; some of you are in entertainment, some are former vegans or vegetarians; some are in real estate, others are chefs or in education, lawyers, doctors, young & not so young, the list is endless.

You're all so wonderful, so different. So what is it that you seem to have in common? The answer: It seems most of you are either enlightened or willing to be. You care where your food comes from and how it's produced. It's how you came to us.

So simple really - or at least we all agree it should be.

You tell us that you like that we are small family producers. And you feel good that your purchase is helping to bring Bison home to California.

With the return of grassfed bison as a red meat staple, a new type customer is emerging. And with you, a positive, sustainable connection has begun for all of us.

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THE RECONNECT FACTOR (cont.)  
- for the animals

There's just seems to be no easy way to say it. Part of bison's history, and therefore our reconnect, is inextricably tied to the arrival of cattle. And, the effort to secure and then hold, grazing land for them. Many lost their lives in this effort. Railroads were built which helped speed up the transport of cattle to the West.

While most school history books are 'politically correct', most of us know that settling the west included oppressing Native Americans. This was most effectively achieved by destroying their primary source of food, clothing and shelter. And along with it, perhaps their strongest spiritual symbol of abundance and prosperity,

With government encouraging killing as many buffalo as possible in the shortest time possible, the natives were defeated and plentiful grazing was made available for aristocratic cattle shipped en masse from Europe. (See For the Record for current population numbers of both species.)

Many of us have pioneering ancestors who helped settle the west. In our family, among these pioneers was Kathy's great grandmother, Margaret Carlson, who came to be known as the Cattle Queen of Montana®. We respectfully share a similar history with many cattle producers, though our path has been different.

Today, when you buy bison meat, you are helping to restore an authentic heritage animal. When you buy Lindner Grassfed Bison, you are helping to restore them humanely and sustainably to their native home in northern California. (see map on pg. 5)

## BISON STORIES

*This is just one of many stories we look forward to sharing with you.  
One by one, they light the way home.*

***"You do not choose the Bison.  
The Bison choose you."***

Our own connection is one that has slowly unfolded. It is clear that many of you are also drawn to these magnificent heritage animals. Somehow Bison seem to belong to all of us, though it didn't start out that way.

A few years ago, Kathy read an article written by a Native American woman In Colorado who makes drums. It beautifully described how each individual drum is carefully hand crafted with bison leather. Each drum has

a special sound and, it is believed, each is uniquely destined to belong to a certain individual, a certain soul.



The article also described the special relationship between the animal and Native Americans, and the gifts the bison offer. Kathy was especially struck when she saw the words: "You do not choose the buffalo. The buffalo choose you."

Kathy knew she needed to talk with the drum maker. As silly as she knew it may sound to some, she needed to know that it was ok for us, as descendents of pioneers who settled the west, to raise them. How does a Native American feel about that, she wondered. How do we claim as ours, the same, strong connection they describe?

Over the phone, the drum maker was warm, gracious and lively. After a while, the conversation turned to bison, which they also raise. After a while, Kathy finally got up her nerve. "Because they are so special to Native Americans, is it ok for others to raise them?" she asked.

The drum maker stopped for a moment, surprised by the question. Slowly she replied, "You know, when ever I encounter those who bring up the past . . . " she laughed and added, "and there are plenty on both sides believe me. I tell them to 'Put down that rock. We are all one now.' Of course it's ok for others to raise them. They are prophesied to return." She graciously and kindly added she could tell by the humbleness of the question, that there was no doubt we had been chosen.

After they hung up, Kathy surprised herself by having a good cry. It isn't the first time we've been moved to tears through owning these animals, and we know it won't be the last.

This story is just one of many of how bison create a unique connection with all of us.

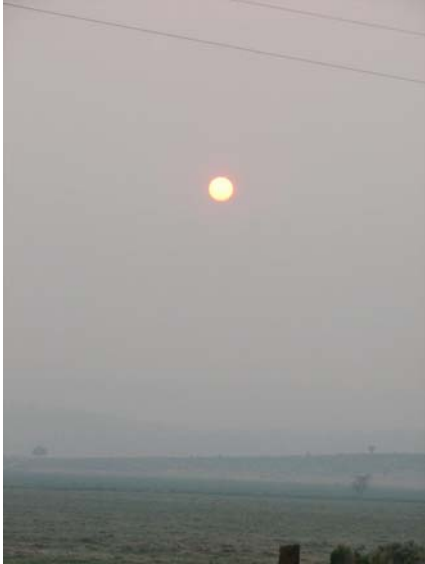
For those who seek it, part of this connection it seems, includes a long overdue and gentle healing. As with all healings, it feels good and it feels right. It strengthens our spirit and guides us to the better path, the greater good.

## FROM THE RANCH

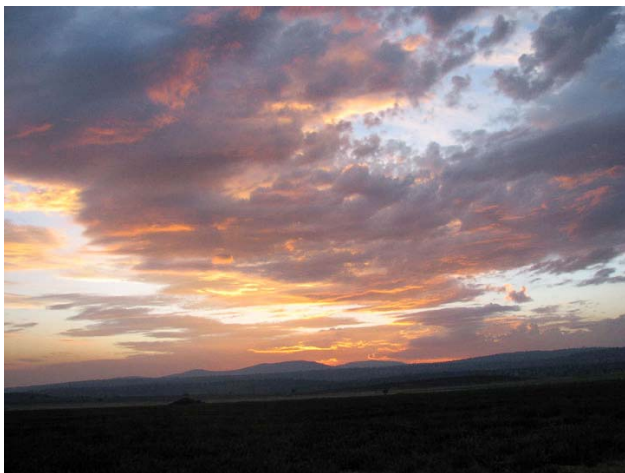
### HOT, DRY & FIRES

It has been another dry summer. The only measurable precipitation we had on the ranch this summer was in July, in the form of a hail and high wind storm. Most of the moisture ran off when the hail melted, so we were again grateful for our irrigation.

As many of you may remember, there were several forest fires in Northern California lasting for weeks.



At times this reduced visibility to less than 1/2 a mile in an otherwise open valley floor. While the herd became less active, our days were difficult for working outdoors. But it sure resulted in some pretty sunsets!



### HONEY BEES & EARTHWORMS

For those who may not know it, our ranch originally mostly grew and sold alfalfa for hay. Each year there is a little less, and each year we overseed with grass for our grassfed bison. Because alfalfa, a legume, naturally

adds nitrogen back into the soil it helps the grass grow without adding chemical fertilizers.



In bloom, alfalfa smells like lilacs – just wonderful! So when we see our robust area honey bees out there working away, we bless them and we thank them for being part of our sustainable cycle.

This year Kat, our spunky, hard working part-time ranch hand, has been on the lookout for earthworms! (We may be the first area non-traditional owners who have embraced a no till approach.) One of the many casualties of tilling the soil is the disappearance of earthworms that are Nature's little aerators and fertilizers. Though we have no pictures yet, Kat confirmed they are back and we are all overjoyed for the health benefits they represent to the soil. We're hoping for lots of baby worms too!

### HEART OF THE GRASS – OUR AG WELL

The bison's hay and pastures are kept green with our agricultural well which pumps life giving water through our irrigation equipment (k-line pod system and wheel lines – look for photos of Kat moving them next spring.)

Unfortunately, this year pumping water suddenly became more expensive, as our power provider announced a whopping 30% increase in electrical costs. To offset this unexpected rise in expenses, we reduced our pumping hours by installing a timer on the pump.

While this helped achieve more efficient usage, pumping costs are still running around \$3,000 per month. As you can see, it costs significant money to pump water, to grow the grass and hay for grassfed bison!

Then, for several weeks beginning in June, we noticed gravel in the water pumped out of the ag well. This was a new development. We also noticed that we lost about 20 pounds of water pressure.

Without any visible leaks, we surmised the water table was changing. None of these things were good signs, but the well continued to function and we produced two good cuttings of hay for the winter.

By August, a vibration developed in the pump and grew to such an extent that Ken decided to shut the well down in September. Though we were still about 4 weeks until the end of the season, and a vital third cutting of hay in jeopardy, he decided that running the equipment longer may do even more serious damage.

Two weeks ago, the entire 255 ft. pump was pulled out of the well (see photo), The bottom section was found to have detached itself and fallen into the well cavity, which explained many things. This pump has been in operation since 1978, so it ran for almost 30 years before it failed. The repair cost is estimated at \$12,000. This will have to be paid out of pocket by Lindner Bison.



#### HAY FIELD & PASTURE IMPROVEMENTS

On a positive note, the seeding done the previous two years on our northern hay ground has taken hold and did well this year. Hay production increased about 50% over the last two years, just as the cost of hay increased dramatically because of production costs. We're grateful we don't have to buy hay!

Our proprietary recipe includes a drought tolerant mix of grasses, with some brome grass, orchard and clover, to compliment the native and non-native grasses and alfalfa already there.

We believe it produces absolutely the best flavored grassfed bison meat we've ever tasted from any other region!



This resulting increased hay production is a good thing, as we had 33 calves this year and that means more mouths to feed this winter. Even with animals being taken for meat, the over-all herd size continues to grow.



We're grateful to have our neighbor Chris do our haying this year. Along with raising cattle, haying is his business and we continue to learn a lot from him. It also means a reduced carbon footprint.

2008 marked the start of a pasture improvement program by over-seeding with various grasses. This requires that we fence off pasture sections with temporary electric fencing. This keeps the animals off the emerging new grasses for the first season or two.



The important first "test section" (in the back of the above photo showing bright green) was planted this summer and was largely successful, except in some areas where watering was insufficient. Kat followed up by broadcasting some seed in the area where she's now standing. This particular area had been too acidic to grow anything for years, so we now see that with water, the soil is healing and the grass is ready to grow back.

As you can imagine, this pasture improvement effort is a long term project and will probably take 5 years to complete.

We'll keep you up to date on this project as it progresses.

## FOR THE RECORD

Facts you may find interesting.

### Breeds

Bison<sup>1</sup>: 3

Plains Bison, Wood Bison, Wisent (European) Bison

Cattle<sup>2</sup>: 800

See below for list.

### Population

Bison<sup>3</sup>: 500,000

Cattle<sup>4</sup>: 1.3 billion

Note: In the U.S., about 100,000 are harvested daily.

Comment: Clearly, in our lifetime and beyond, there will be no shortage of cattle or cattle breeds worldwide. In fact, with artificial insemination and cloning, numbers may increase.

For Bison, though, Slow Food's ironic premise is sound: It is in eating them, that we insure their survival as a species. In other words, what ever we buy for food, we are asking that food source to produce more of a breed or species.

## BUYING LOCAL V. BUYING NATIVE HERITAGE

For many good reasons, we support the challenge of buying locally grown food when ever possible.

In bringing home to California, 100% grassfed bison, our buying challenge reasonably expands to include them by 'buying native heritage' within a day's drive.

Here's why:

Bison were native to California in the early 1500s (tan area). By the mid-1800s their numbers and location had shrunk almost exclusively to the Midwest (dark blue).



By the early 1900s, about 600-1000 remained. Pre-dating any 'endangered species act,' parks and private ranchers primarily from the Central northern states brought them onto their property in order to save them. It worked, but clearly they still need our help and support in order to continue their recovery.

Supporting the return of Bison as a true heritage species means first honoring them by restoring them to the area where they are known to be native. When we buy 'native heritage' within a state or region, it encourages production which replenishes their numbers and helps bring them home to that state or region.

### About the term "heritage"

As Americans, we have a deep love and pride in our country and those who live here. When we named our ranch "Heritage Ranch" we thought the term best described a return to what was here before our European ancestors first arrived. To us, it describes the original home of our bison and future home for heritage turkeys. What we're finding is that some livestock breeders may define 'heritage' as man-made within the last 50 yrs. or so.

For all of us as consumers, as it was with the new term "grassfed," the term "heritage" may not always mean what we think. When it comes to a "heritage species", be sure to ask plenty of questions until you are satisfied. Your food dollar vote tells the producer you want more of the same and are willing to "finance" more of the same.

Lindner Bison appreciates that you are seeking and supporting 100% grassfed bison meat.

We look forward to the day when heritage bison meat will be abundantly available through us and other ethical bison producers in California and the U.S.



### BY THE WAY . . .

#### ORDER YOUR HOLIDAY ROAST!

Once again we're taking roast orders! Past favorites include our wonderful custom sized cut sirloin tip roast and/or standing rib roast (available once a year only)

#### GREEN TRIPE & PAUNCH!

Because of repeated requests, we are getting closer to being able to offer green tripe for dogs. Also, rumen content called "paunch" which may contain valuable enzymes. In the wild, it is well known that the organs are the first choice among predators.

This is more labor intensive for us, but as you know we are committed to capture as much as possible from each harvest. Our goal is to honor the animal by wasting nothing. In so doing, more food is made available and fewer harvests are necessary.

**References, links and resources:**

1. <http://www.cryptomundo.com/cryptozoo-news/wood-bison/>
2. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_breeds\\_of\\_cattle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_breeds_of_cattle)
3. [www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Bison\\_bison.html](http://www.ultimateungulate.com/Artiodactyla/Bison_bison.html)
4. [www.cattle-today.com](http://www.cattle-today.com)

<http://animals.howstuffworks.com/endangered-species/bison-extinction2.htm>

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