

# Newsletter – Summer 2024

## Reservations 2024

This newsletter is being sent a little later than usual because we actually took some vacation in May and July. It was our first long break in many years. But now we are back and full of energy for the upcoming market season.



And Sheep May Safely Graze

As usual, beef and lamb will be ready for delivery starting at the end of August. We will be filling pre-orders first but we will still have beef and lamb available for the farmers' markets in [Albuquerque](#) and [Socorro](#) starting August 31<sup>st</sup>.

We are taking reservations now for beef and lamb to be delivered in the fall. Let us know what you want today to make sure that you don't miss out!

Information and pricing for our beef and lamb products can be found [here](#) on our website. Remember that it costs nothing to make a reservation and you can change your mind at any time. Please send your requests to [sales@dunhillranch.com](mailto:sales@dunhillranch.com) (please include your phone number in the e-mail) or call us at 575-854-2847.

We are still selling our beef and lamb "by-the-pound", as opposed to by-the-piece including our whole and half animals, which are priced based on the weight of meat delivered to you.



Free-Range Steers (Not Allowed in the Garden!)

Unfortunately, prices for everything we need on the ranch are still rising steadily, so we have found it necessary to raise the prices of some of our products, but we have kept the increases as small as possible so as to keep our meat affordable. We hope you understand and find our prices fair.

## Ranch Hand Update

If you read [last year's newsletter](#), you will remember that, in the fall, we took a gamble on Blake, a young Border Collie. At the end of last year's article, we described Blake to you as a promising youngster, but it was still unclear whether he would become the good working dog we need.

We are happy to report that Blake has justified our faith in him. He's going to be our main working dog from here on out. Finn, our 11-year-old Border Collie, is still working, but she's

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## Lamb Merguez Patties

We admit it - we are suckers for anything labeled "lamb merguez". Over the years we have tried dozens of different types of merguez sausage that we found in stores. Most of them are really good, but they always seemed to us to be missing that special something.

Enter the Recipe Deconstruction Squad. We have studied recipes, bought sausages, tested, tasted, added, subtracted, fiddled and diddled and finally have come up with a merguez sausage that tastes the way that we think it should. We hope you agree.

Note that we used Dunhill Ranch lamb in testing this recipe. It tends to be leaner (80-85% lean) than most store-bought ground lamb, but even so, we had to use a splatter screen when pan-frying the patties!

Serves 2-4

### Ingredients

- ½ tsp salt
- ⅓ tsp sugar
- ⅓ tsp red chile pepper flakes
- 1¼ tsp coarsely ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp bittersweet smoked Spanish paprika (yes, bittersweet and smoked matters!)
- 2 tsp oregano leaves (dried is fine)
- 2 tsp finely minced chives (dried is fine)
- 1 tsp finely minced fresh garlic
- ½ cup (scant) roasted red bell pepper, very finely minced
- 1 Tbs robust red wine, very cold
- 1 lb lean ground lamb, very cold
- Feta cheese to use as a topping

### Instructions

- 1) Place the dry ingredients (up to oregano) in a medium bowl and mix well.
- 2) Add the chives, garlic, red pepper, and wine. Mix again.
- 3) Add the lamb a little bit at a time, mixing constantly with a fork (or your hands, if you are making a larger batch). Work quickly in order to keep the mixture cool.

- 4) Divide the mixture into 6 medium patties about 3" in diameter. We used a lid from a glass jar to get a nice round patty. It is not necessary to add oil to your frying pan. The lamb will release enough fat so that the patties don't stick. Fry the patties in a heavy skillet on high heat for about 4 minutes per side or until the internal temperature reaches 125 degrees. Both sides should have a dark crust and the interior should be pink.
- 5) Serve topped with a thin slice of feta cheese if desired.
- 6) These patties go well with couscous seasoned with mint, pine nuts, and raisins; pureed squash; cooked spinach; cucumber-tomato-feta salad; or just about any Mediterranean side dish that strikes your fancy.



Lamb Patties with Roasted Squash and Garlic Spinach

### Notes for Making Sausage Links

You can use this recipe for making sausage links. If you do, you will probably want to add a bit more salt and less wine to the mix. You might try ¾ tsp salt and 1 tsp wine per pound of meat. Depending on how lean your ground lamb is, you may want to add just a bit of pork fat to the mix before stuffing. Natural lamb casings work best for sausages, but they are a little tricky to stuff without breaking them. Nevertheless, they are worth the effort. Natural hog casings are much easier to stuff, but they are rather large. We do not recommend that you use collagen casings.

## Gaucha-Grilled Flank Steak with Chimichurri

There is nothing that we like better than grilled meat. Our favorite cuts for grilling are beef flank and skirt steak, though we also are fond of grilling lamb shoulder (boneless or chops). Any of these cuts will work well with this recipe. Note that traditional Gaucha Grilling uses wood rather than charcoal. If you have some large chunks of mesquite, apple, pecan, or pear wood, by all means use it to do your grilling. If not, charcoal, or charcoal with wood chips will work well.

Thanks to C. Blaylock for the inspiration and the photo.

Serves 6

### *Ingredients for Meat*

- 1½ lbs beef flank or skirt steak or thick sections of boneless lamb shoulder or chops
- olive oil, fresh ground pepper, and salt

### *Ingredients for Chimichurri*

- ½ cup olive oil
- 3 Tbs apple cider or red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ¾ cup chopped parsley
- ¾ cup chopped cilantro
- 2 Tbs fresh oregano leaves
- 2 Tbs minced fresh garlic
- salt, black pepper, paprika to taste

### *Instructions*

1. Rub the meat with generous amounts of olive oil, pepper, and salt. Let it sit for 1-2 hours in the fridge, uncovered.
2. About 45 minutes before you expect to serve, start a fire in one half of your grill. You want a really hot fire on one side and no fire on the other, so don't skimp on the wood or charcoal.
3. While you are waiting for the fire to get hot, put the chimichurri ingredients into a mini-chopper, food processor, or blender. Process them until the mixture is ALMOST smooth, but not quite. Then add salt, pepper, and paprika to taste.

4. When your fire is really hot but mostly all coals, put your meat on the grill over the hot side. The idea is to quickly char the outside of the meat and leave the inside very rare, thus the need for a really hot fire. You need to turn the meat frequently to avoid over-charring.
5. Once you have a nice char on the meat, check the internal temperature. With a thin piece of meat, it might already be done. You want it right around 120 degrees. If it is less than that, move the meat to the non-fire side of the grill and cover the grill with the grill's air holes mostly closed. Continue to cook the meat until it reaches 120 degrees.
6. Take the meat off the grill, cover with aluminum foil and allow to rest for about 5 minutes. It will continue to cook a little leaving you with a beautiful rare to medium-rare steak.
7. Slice the meat against the grain in thin slices and serve, topped with a little chimichurri sauce. Be careful, too much sauce can overwhelm the flavor of the meat.
8. Serve with fried potatoes, green beans, or whatever other side dish suits your mood.



Gaucha-Grilled Lamb Shoulder with Roast Potatoes and Garlic Green Beans



## *A New Ranch Hand - Continued*

starting to slow down. Understandable at her age - she has a lot of miles under her paws.

At the end of last year, Blake was quite the teenager; trying it on whenever he thought he could get away with it. So, we decided to give him a rest from training to let him absorb some of the lessons. Happily, this respite coincided with lambing time for the sheep, when he would not be able to work anyway (as a momma ewe will often attack any dog that comes near her new lambs).

Not that Blake was allowed to laze around the house all the time. Because he was already 8 months old when we got him, Blake was lacking some social skills and needed more experience with new objects in day-to-day ranch life. Over the winter, we tried to expose him to as many new people and experiences as possible.

At the end of March, all the lambs had been born and the mommas were getting tired of nursing them, so we decided to start training Blake again. The first thing we did was have Finn work the sheep to make sure that the mommas weren't too aggressive - Finn is old enough to know when the mommas are bluffing and when she needs to back off.



Finn and Blake - Working Hard, or Hardly Working?

Once we determined that the sheep were ready for him, we started working Blake with the entire flock in our 2-acre corral. Oddly enough, it's often easier for a young dog to work a large group than a small one.

We were very pleased to see that Blake had, in fact, absorbed the lessons from last fall. He didn't need a refresher course on anything. Even better, after a week or so, we started to see him actually thinking about what he was doing, rather than charging around at top speed. Most importantly, he really started listening to us and clearly wanted to do the right thing when asked.

Blake had the basics down pat, but he was still lacking LOTS of necessary skills, and he was distinctly "right-pawed". Many dogs prefer working sheep in a clockwise direction rather than counter-clockwise (or vice-versa), but Blake was a bit extreme. He could gather the sheep beautifully when moving clockwise around them. But when we asked him to gather in the other direction, we could pretty well count on a train wreck.



Blake Showing Good Form Driving Sheep

We made a list of the areas where Blake needed improvement, and started an intensive program of training on those areas. We worked him circling the sheep counter clockwise, stopping completely when asked, backing off the sheep before they started to panic, making small moves left and right, driving the sheep away from us, and even started to get him accustomed to whistles accompanied by commands (eventually he will respond directly to the whistle, which will allow him to respond to commands even when the sheep are a half-mile away).

This was a really rewarding time. Blake really looked forward to working every day and

absorbed the lessons quickly. He learned to handle momma ewes that didn't want him near their lambs, and learned how to prevent a lamb from bolting back to its momma when the momma was in a different corral.



Blake Holding the Sheep at a Distance

It's mid-summer now, so how is he doing? Blake has had additional time off, since we took some vacation in May and July, but he is now able to do all the chores in the corrals, and has started working in the open field. We are still keeping him close to us (200 yards tops), until he reliably responds to "stand" and to "recall" whistles. He still needs to learn to ignore rabbits and birds when he is working. We are sure that all this will come with time and experience.

There is still a lot of training to do, but we are very happy with his progress so far. We will keep you posted...



Blake, At 2½ Years Old

## Sheep Shearing – Not!

One of the questions that we often get asked is: "Do you sell the wool from the sheep as well as the meat?" The short answer is "No." This is because we raise Katahdin hair sheep and they don't produce wool; they have hair like a dog, which grows long and keeps them warm in the winter, but they shed it all in the summer, which keeps them cool.



Katahdin Ewe in Mid-Shed – Spring 2024

This is a good thing, since it's really hard to find anyone who can professionally shear sheep these days and the price offered for wool does not justify the expense of shearing and transporting the wool, unless you are raising very large numbers of fine-wool sheep.

However, we still do find a use for our sheep-shearing clippers - our guard dog, Thor! He spends his life with the sheep 24x7 in dust, dirt, rain, snow, brambles, and bugs. Thor is a Great Pyrenees/Anatolian cross which means he has a thick woolly undercoat with a long-fur top coat. This two-layer protection helps keep him warm in the winter and makes it much less likely he will be injured in a fight with a predator. Unfortunately, this combination gets matted and filled with dirt and twigs after a long winter. When the weather warms up in May, we can see Thor starting to lose energy because he is getting too hot.

So, one bright sunny morning in May we hauled out the clippers, the rough comb, our sharpest pair of scissors, a bag of dog treats, and a rake.



Why the rake? Read on...



Thor - Headed for the Beauty Salon

Thor is not enthusiastic about getting a haircut no matter how cool he looks and feels afterwards. It's sort of like taking a child to the dentist. He doesn't actively resist, but he is definitely not keen on the process and keeps trying to lie down or escape into his dog shelter. Generally, one of us has to hold him upright and give him the occasional treat, while the other wields the tools.

Thor's coat is very thick and coarse - in places there are 2-3 inches of fur - so even with sharp tools, giving him a good trim takes a while. We also have to be very careful to leave enough fur to protect him in vulnerable places (such as under the throat).



Would You Like Me to Trim the Beard Too?

After about 45 minutes, all of us have had enough of the process. By then, the corral is filled with clumps of fur.

This is where the rake comes in. This year we trimmed about 4 pounds of fur off Thor - that's enough fur to fill a Walmart bag really full.



Emma - I Think I'm Good with My Existing "Do"

Throughout this whole process Emma, our other guardian dog, watched placidly. She is a Maremma breed, and she sheds her coat periodically, just like a house dog. However, she is not able to escape the beauty regimen entirely; we still have to clip both dogs' claws.

So, we are grateful not to have to shear the sheep and are glad that the Dunhill Ranch beauty parlor is only open once a year. After an hour at the salon, Thor and Emma are styling for another year!



Dunhill Ranch Pot-of-Gold Not Included!