

**A CASE STUDY:
The Development and Efficacy of
Pasture-Raised Beef Marketing
Messages**

Thankful Harvest

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**Case Study Prepared by Food Alliance Midwest and
Practical Farmers of Iowa**

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Introduction: Pasture-Raised Meats Marketing Messages

As consumers become increasingly attuned to health and environmental effects of food production, meat producers are racing to make claims about their production methods. Even mainstream grocery stores now stock many products carrying labels such as “organic,” “free range,” “grass-fed,” or “pasture-raised.” Does this barrage of sustainability claims confuse the consumer? Which of the many marketing messages employed is the most effective? How can producers make convincing claims about their sustainable meat production methods?

With these questions in mind, Food Alliance Midwest through a collaboration with the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Minnesota, the Center for Integrated Agriculture Systems at the University of Wisconsin, Iowa State University Extension, and Food Routes designed a project to study the development and efficacy of pasture-raised meat marketing messages. The project was supported by FoodRoutes and the Leopold Center.

The group chose three Iowa farmers who practice pasture-raised production systems and who market their products directly to consumers. We conducted case studies to examine which messages and communication strategies are effective

in communication the benefits of pasture-raised systems to consumers.

The first step in the process was to conduct consumer surveys and focus groups to determine which messages about pasture-raised meats were most convincing and compelling to the average consumer. The focus groups overwhelmingly indicated that the most compelling messages about pasture-raised meats focused on taste, health and nutrition, support for local farmers and, to a lesser extent, environmental sustainability and humane treatment of animals.

A consultant then conducted farm visits and interviews with the participating meat producers. The consultant developed marketing materials for each producer, catering to each producer’s desired consumer market and focusing on those messages about pasture-raised meat that the consumer focus groups determined to be most effective and compelling.

The following case study tells the story of one of the three Iowa meat producers, Tom and Kristi German of Thankful Harvest Tenderheart Beef.



One set of the three Iowa producers selected to participate in this project were Tom and Kristi German, owners of Thankful Harvest TenderHeart Beef in Holstein, Iowa.

A Family Legacy

"As tender as a woman's heart," Tom German's grandfather used to say of the beef he sold at the Chicago Stockyards. When Tom and his wife, Kristi, returned to Tom's family farm 10 years ago to begin a pasture-raised beef operation, they wanted the name of their product to reflect this family legacy. Now, Tom and Kristi's TenderHeart beef is known to their customers as "the way meat used to taste, the way it's supposed to taste."

The Germans' animals eat only grass for their entire lives (the only additional supplements are free-salt minerals). Tom and Kristi look at pasturing as a perfect scenario: Surrounded by a delicious salad bar of forage grasses, the animals feed themselves, which reduces the human energy and costly feed inputs needed to sustain them. In addition, the pasture environment-with the daily exercise, sunshine and fresh air-leads to happy, healthy animals.

Raised without antibiotics or added growth hormones, the Germans' beef cattle are certified organic. The operation was also recently certified by Food Alliance in recognition of the environmentally and socially responsible practices used on the farm. Tom said customers should know that his beef "is produced as if they would have done it themselves, with the utmost attention to eating quality and human health benefits."

In addition to cattle, the Germans produce pastured broilers and farm-raised eggs. And last, but hardly least, they have three children: Daniel, 8; Morgan, 8; and Grace, 6.

Markets and goals

Prior to the case study project, Tom and Kristi were marketing their TenderHeart beef directly to customers in bulk (quarter or half an animal). In addition, they sold TenderHeart beef at a local natural food store. For advertising, Tom and Kristi relied primarily on word-of-mouth referrals, as well as the brand recognition from selling their product in the natural food store. Interestingly, they had also recently begun to receive referrals from an osteopath in Omaha, Neb., who recommended their pasture-raised beef for some of his patients. (This idea originally came from the same doctor, who called the Germans and asked for information he could make available to his patients. The doctor had learned of their product from a patient who had purchased some after being advised

by the same doctor that she should eat more healthfully.)

The Germans had already developed names for both their company (Thankful Harvest) and their beef products (TenderHeart). In developing these names, Tom and Kristi tried to stay away from geography and direct farm ties. "We wanted something that was more universally acceptable and mobile," Tom said. "We think we can build a story that is not just tied to this farm's location."

Tom and Kristi were eager to participate in the case study project in order to develop a brochure to expand their marketing. They planned to widen their retail market as well as increase referrals from regional doctors and alternative health practitioners by placing brochures in doctors' offices.

In order to augment their bulk sales, the Germans hoped to implement a subscription program for frozen beef cuts. With this CSA-style program, customers would purchase a quarter or half an animal to be delivered bi-monthly over a six-month or yearlong period; the Germans would primarily target this program to customers with limited freezer space or an income too limited for one bulk purchase. Besides targeting these specific markets, the Germans wanted their brochure to highlight the difference between their pasture-raised product and conventional grain-fed beef, focusing on "both what we do, and what we don't do."

John Seymour Anderson, the consultant contracted to design marketing materials for each project participant, visited the German farm to interview Tom and Kristi. Using the messages determined by the focus groups to be most compelling, Anderson designed a brochure advertising TenderHeart beef. The brochure highlights the flavor and tenderness, as well as the health benefits, of the product. In addition, it presents three convenient buying options for customers, one of which is the subscription program that Tom and Kristi had hoped to promote.

Pasture-Raised messages

- ❖ **Flavorful.** The Germans "approach our beef like making wine. We start with the best ingredients..." The perfect mix of animal breed, good forage grasses, and careful handling lead to the perfect flavor of beef.
- ❖ **Nutritious: What it *has*.** Grass fed beef contains many beneficial nutrients: "studies show that pasture raised (grass fed) beef is naturally high in health promoting essential fatty acids [and] Vitamin E."
- ❖ **Nutritious: What it *doesn't have*.** Pasture-raised beef is lower in cholesterol and saturated fats, as well as containing fewer calories than conventional beef.
- ❖ **Convenient.** Customers can purchase meat directly from the farm, either in bulk or through a bi-monthly

subscription buying program. In addition, individual cuts are available at a local natural food store.

- ❖ **Processed locally.** By working with a small local processor, the Germans ensure humane treatment of their animals. They also minimize the stress the animals experience.
- ❖ **Environmentally-friendly.** The Germans manage their farm to preserve biodiversity, as well as soil health.

Measuring success

Eighteen months after the development of the marketing brochure, Tom and Kristi have distributed their brochures to potential customers in person and through the mail. They've also followed through with their plan to make the brochure available in doctors' offices. The Germans went a step further and had some of their existing customers give brochures to people they knew as well as placing brochures in the offices of their doctors.

Tom said the brochure has proven successful in helping him reach new customers, especially those interested in the health benefits of the product.

Of all the messages in the brochure, Tom said the health message is proving the most effective in attracting new customers. "This is all about healthy food," Tom said. "It's about doctors telling their patients they should eat better, and those people coming to us."

Of additional messages, Tom said, "We've had virtually no customers coming to us because of environmental issues. That's a nice tag-along thing for customers, but nobody came in the door because of that. We're all somewhat self-centered. We say, 'food has to be good for me, in taste and health, first.'"

Time saver

Tom said the brochure has saved time. Phone calls with people interested in the product and its story would normally average 45 minutes each, talking through the health benefits and research. The potential customer would have no choice but to memorize the information or write it down. Now the Germans can give a short pitch and say the rest is in the mail. Brochure to the rescue.

The reaction to the brochure has been overwhelmingly positive. "We've received many compliments," Tom said. "Because there is so much information in the brochure, we haven't had comments about specific items, but the overall reaction has been great."

The Germans chose to include a lot of information in their brochure and didn't worry that people might be overwhelmed. "People are looking for this information," Tom said. "They need a place where it can all be consolidated. They made the effort to find us in the first place, so they're willing to make the effort to read it."

When asked if he would benefit from continued marketing support from the project, Tom answered in the affirmative. "I'd like to fine-tune the message and maybe produce some more materials," he said. John has already helped the Germans create business cards and refrigerator magnets and they turn occasionally to him for marketing advice.

In the end, Tom said the project hasn't really changed his ideas about marketing or how to present the story of his product. "John basically took our story and used the tools and information he had to put together the pasture-raised message," Tom said. "He had the background and experience to help us tell our story. It was a terrific effort."

Brochure Developed for Tom and Kristi German

About Our Farm, Our Family

Tom and Kristi German



The farm we live on has been in Tom's family for three generations going on four. The family has been raising beef and poultry here since 1936. For that matter, as long as anyone can recall, members of the family have lived on farms in Iowa. We both grew up on farms, Tom on this one.

We both earned college degrees and worked in business before returning to this farm with a deep desire to raise healthy food and healthy children while supporting the entire system—from soil to humans—with earth sustaining methods that provide wonderful food and economic sustenance.

We began the pasture based system in 1993 and our transition to organic in 1999. We are dedicated to artisan, family scale farming—a scale that provides us an intimate relationship with the land, the animals, what goes into production, the fruits of our labors and the people who come to rely on us for delicious and nourishing food.

Bonus! Quick Cooking, Less Cleanup

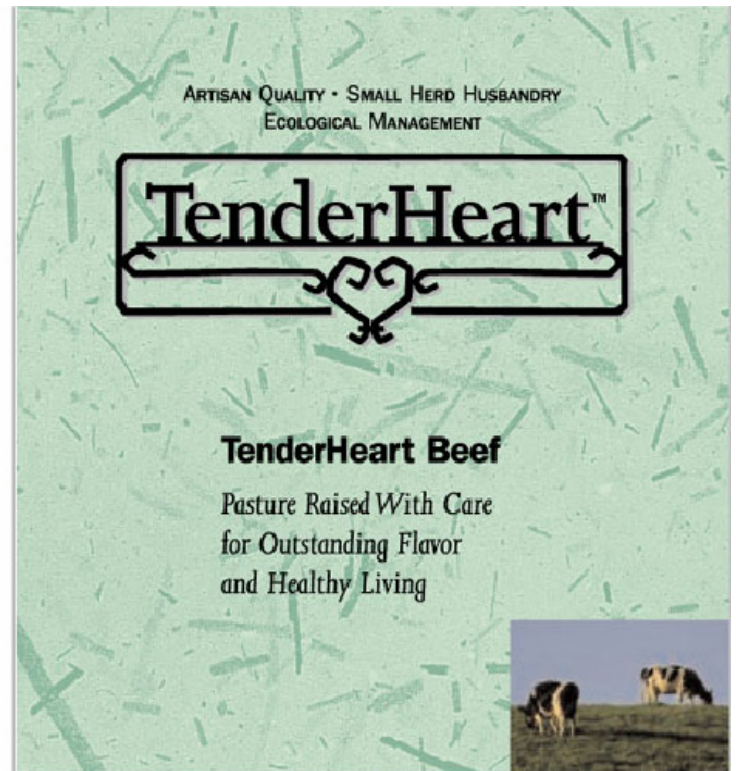
One pleasant discovery we've made, as we prepare steaks and roasts and burgers from our own beef, is the fact that grass fed beef cooks faster. Meat can be cooked to perfection in less time. But, success in the kitchen does require an attentive eye. Many who prepare and dine on grass fed beef tend to cook it slightly less well done than they would conventional beef. It's still healthy and safe, and it preserves the tenderness most people prefer.

Of course, when meat is leaner, by definition, there's less fat in it. Less fat in the meat means less fat left over after cooking, so cleanup is less messy.

For more information, or to place an order:

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Thankful Harvest E-mail:
5139 210th Street Tagerman@netllc.net
Holstein, IA Visit our web page on
51025-8061 www.eatwild.com

Back Cover



Administered No:

- Antibiotics
- Hormones

Contains No:

- Chemical Preservatives
- Chemical Pesticides, Fertilizers or Herbicides

Studies show that pasture raised (grass fed) beef is

Naturally high in:

- Health promoting Essential Fatty Acids
- Vitamin E

Naturally low in:

- Saturated Fats
- Cholesterol
- Calories

3 Convenient Buying Options!
(See details inside.)

Front Cover

What Does Pasture Raised Really Mean?

We think of pasture based farming as a living and learning collaboration with nature. Much of what we do is based on traditional, centuries-proven methods of plant and animal farming. But, just as much, we draw from the latest in scientific understanding as we collaborate with other farmers, research institutes and ag extension services on the up-to-date learning in fostering healthy ecosystems, cows, humans and communities. In the case of our pasture raised beef, we see it as capitalizing on nature's original design and intention for cows.

Land, Soil and Biodiversity

- We select pasture grasses and legumes that will succeed on the particular land forms on our farm.
- The soil is regularly tested for composition and nutrient content.
- We cultivate a mix of grasses and legumes that nourish the cows and soil at the same time — naturally providing essential nitrogen and other nutrients without the use of synthetic chemicals.
- Our practices support the biodiversity of plants, both naturally occurring and those we choose to plant, as well as the creatures that use the pastures for habitat.



Clover is a legume that we plant because it is nourishing to the cows and helps naturally fix nitrogen in the soil.

On our farm, we do some additional things (***) that are not strict requirements of the Pasture Raised method:

- ***Do nothing that would harm soil or groundwater: use no chemical pesticide, fertilizers or herbicides. Our pastures are certified organic — putting nothing into the soil that could harm soil life.
- ***Apply naturally occurring minerals and nutrient compounds to nourish and build the soil, supporting its viability as a living food system.

THE CATTLE

- Bred for success on pasture: we pay close attention to genetics, disposition and health on pasture. We breed those that are happy and productive, and those that are not are sold to other conventional producers.
- A system of Management Intensive Grazing, which moves the herd from pasture to pasture on a planned time cycle is employed to optimize the quality of food they find when feeding.
- Conditions provide livestock healthy lives in a manner natural to them, with free access to fresh air, sunlight, water and safe open space on which to wander and rest.

Mixed with the legumes to create a diet that is highly palatable and rich in nutrients is a carefully managed mix of grasses, both planted and naturally occurring.



THEIR DIET

- We feed the cattle a 100% vegetarian diet from pasture, with no animal byproducts, as is natural to them.
- ***We provide our cattle 100% pasture grown feed year round, which is not a strict requirement for beef to be considered "pasture raised". In winter, when grazing is severely limited, cattle are fed a grass and legume mix harvested from our pastures that has been specially prepared and stored in sufficient quantities for the season.

GIVING BACK TO OUR PASTURE

Soil Mineralization is a process of adding to soil and pasture, rather than only taking away. Beyond satisfying all the requirements for our fields to be certified organic, we apply naturally occurring compounds to restore the balance of minerals and nutrients our soil requires as a healthy living system. Regular soil sample analyses guide us so we can receive nature's bounty without taking away from its own long-term health and productivity.

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Gatefold - Left

Gatefold - Right

Classic Beef Flavor From The Pastures of Northwest Iowa

When we returned to the family farm, we had a goal of raising the healthiest, tastiest beef imaginable. We didn't know then what a difference the right cows, feeding on the right pasture grasses—with the right handling and care—would make. Since then, we've heard from so many of the family members, friends and repeat customers who've experienced TenderHeart Beef, "This is the best meat I've ever eaten." Often, people of our generation or our parents' generation remark, "That's how I remember beef tasting when I was a kid."

In a way, we approach our beef like making wine. We start with the best ingredients nature can provide, and nothing more. Our cattle are carefully bred and selected. We never push them to grow bigger or faster than they would naturally. Our pastures are certified organic, covered with a mixture of plants the cows find highly palatable and nutritious.

And we include nothing in the process that we wouldn't want in our own food—no growth hormones and no antibiotics, no synthetic fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides.

And, the approach has proven itself. Our cows' outdoor activity and pasture diet, perfectly suited to their natural needs, produce a richly flavored, healthy, lean marbled beef. Though this is lean beef, there's more of the good kinds of fat that are beneficial to human health while providing a memorable blend of flavor, tenderness and moisture—for a dining experience we are proud and excited to share.

Eat Grass For A Healthy Diet

Pasture Raised Beef Is Healthy For Everybody

Day to day, our cows graze on a circuit from pasture to pasture, munching on the plants of their choosing while enjoying the sunlight and fresh air, and the company of other cows. These natural low stress conditions are at the heart of raising healthy cattle less susceptible to illness. And, in turn, to producing flavorful, nutritious, health promoting beef.



MORE OF THE GOOD STUFF

Not only is our pasture raised beef a source of high quality, low fat protein and other vitamins and minerals. Recent studies have found that grass fed beef is an excellent source of beneficial fatty acids and vitamin E.

Pasture raised beef contains one of the healthiest ratios of Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids available to humans. Studies suggest that Omega 3 fatty acids, which are abundant in grass fed beef, may help reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer.

PASTURED COWS OUTSMART FOOD SCIENTISTS

A study conducted by the Missouri Feeds Research Center showed that nutrient content in the stomachs of feeding cows was inevitably superior when the cows were left on their own in grass, compared with "feed diets" prepared for them by agricultural scientists. The cows are believed to find optimum nutrition by scent and taste.

In studies, vitamin E has also been found to contribute to a heart-healthy diet. CLA's (conjugated linoleic acids) are plentiful in grass fed beef, and studies are beginning to show evidence that they may help reduce the risk of cancer.

AND LESS OF WHAT YOU DON'T WANT

Just as important as what's in TenderHeart Beef is what you won't find in it. Studies have shown that pasture raised beef is significantly lower in saturated fats and cholesterol. And, per serving, it is also lower in calories than grain fed beef.

As we mentioned before, living on pasture is healthier for cattle. It's their natural habitat. As a result, when cattle are not confined in close quarters and have access to fresh air, sunlight, grass on solid ground and the shade of occasional trees or ravines, they are happier and less susceptible to infection. Studies show they carry a lower, healthy, bacteria count. (We all need certain amount of bacteria for our bodies to function and be healthy.) And, because of the acids produced when digesting grasses, the digestive tracts of pasture raised cows are dramatically more resistant to E coli infection than those of grain fed cattle.

For more detailed information, and to find specific studies on which this health and nutrition information is based, visit www.catwild.com.

3 Convenient Ways To Buy That'll Fit Your Budget And Your Freezer

You don't have to own a big freezer to buy our beef. But, once you've tried it, you may wish you did.

BULK: 1/2 OR 1/4 COW

We have enjoyed the appreciation and repeat business of our customers who buy in bulk, usually 1/4 or 1/2 cow. It is the best economic deal for the customer who has the ability to make one large payment and the freezer space to store the meat. And, as you'd expect, it offers a wide variety of cuts of meat for all types of meals and occasions, available whenever you want them. In addition, this option provides the choice to have the processor cut your meat to your specifications. Of course, there's nothing to stop you from splitting a bulk purchase with friends or family. You would need to confer with the processor about dividing it and any associated charges. Delivered frozen and freezer-safe wrapped.

CUTS-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB

Experience has taught us that there are many potential buyers who simply don't have the freezer space or cash on hand to make a single large purchase. So, we've devised a plan that combines an annual commitment with monthly packs of selected cuts, paid for on a monthly basis. This plan enables you to purchase ____ of a cow, and spread both the delivery and the cost of the purchase over the course of a year. During the year, you would divide up the normal selection of cuts represented by the ____ cow. You would not be able to buy only T-bones every month, all year long. Consult our order form for details. Delivered frozen and freezer-safe wrapped.

INDIVIDUAL CUTS AT RETAIL

We are currently selling selected frozen cuts, including ground beef, at competitive rates at _____, just north of Holstein on Highway _____. It's a great store selling lots of natural foods and other household products for healthy living.

Custom Local Processing Helps Ensure Our Promise Of Quality

For our custom small batch processing, we prefer to work with skilled certified processors as close to the farm as possible. The less our animals have to travel before processing, the less stress they experience. Stress is a major factor that can negatively affect the flavor and tenderness of the meat.

We know these processors well. They provide humane treatment to the animals, and their unhurried approach—with attention to every detail of quality assurance—further ensures both tenderness and flavor—as well as safety. And, they are perfectly suited to provide the individualized attention our bulk customers require.

All of our beef is dry aged for two weeks. It's a traditional process for custom meats that enhances flavor and tenderness. If it sounds familiar, that's because you often see dry aging mentioned on restaurant menus next to expensive steaks. No artificial ingredients, color or preservatives are used.

Our beef is processed in a USDA inspected plant to ensure quality and safety.



Refrigerator Magnet Developed for Tom and Kristi German

Thankful Harvest™

Home of TenderHeart™ Beef,
Pastured Poultry & Farmstead Eggs



ARTISAN QUALITY
SMALL HERD HUSBANDRY
ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT

Time to Re-Order?

Call:

712-365-4433

e-mail:

tagerman@netllc.net

Visit our web page:

www.eatwild.com

Pasture raised with care
for outstanding flavor
and healthy living