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## Eat local, grow local: Sylvan Dale takes pride as natural beef provider

BY SARAH DE BUSE NELSON • FOR THE COLORADOAN • APRIL 13, 2010

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Heading towards the mountains on U.S. Highway 34 is always a spectacular drive. After you leave Loveland and head to Estes Park, you may not realize is that there is an award-winning ranch tucked away in the Big Thompson Canyon.

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landscape," according to Dave Armstrong, a 20-year resident of Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch.

That landscape grows fine beef cattle. Sylvan Dale sells its grass-fed beef to visitors and local buyers. Heart-J Natural Beef is from its own herd of free-range steers raised without steroids or hormones. You can find it at local farmers markets, including in Fort Collins, at the ranch and also online at [beef@sylvandale.com](mailto:beef@sylvandale.com).

Sylvan Dale offers its guests horseback rides, cattle drives, fishing, youth activities, hay rides and more. And Executive Chef Scott Atchison brings 25 years of culinary knowledge and experience to ranch operations, sometimes feeding 2,500 people in a weekend. Much of the ranch's food comes from local produce and its ranch-raised beef.

Sarah De Buse Nelson is an enthusiastic locavore and a volunteer for Be Local Northern Colorado ([www.BeLocalNC.org](http://www.BeLocalNC.org)).

Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch was started by Maurice and Tillie Jessup, who purchased the heart of the current property in 1946. Over the years, it has continued to be a family affair with the ranch currently being operated by their children Susan and David Jessup.

What makes Sylvan Dale unique is its combination of attractions. It is one of the West's best-known dude ranches. In addition, the ranch has a major commitment to conservation and long-term preservation. They also raise and sell grass-fed beef directly to the public. Natural beef has been a tradition at Sylvan Dale since the 1960s. Over the years, the Jessup family has developed a unique herd well suited to the grasslands of our Rocky Mountain foothills.

For Susan Jessup and her family, it has been vital to ensure the land be preserved. Currently, 60 percent of the ranch, about 1,800 acres, is in a perpetual conservation easement and can never be developed. At the same time, a small number of home sites are available, which helps make the ranch financially sustainable.

The Jessups have worked diligently with Larimer County Parks and Open Lands and the Legacy Land Trust to make this a reality.

This means the opportunity for guests and area residents alike to experience beautiful open country and free-ranging livestock.

"The best part of the land is that a person can look at it only as an agricultural and recreational



Krista Holsclaw, herd manager at Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch's Heart-J Beef, with Margie, one of her cows. (Courtesy of Susan Jessup)

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Eat local-grow local is a series featuring some of the farmers and ranchers who help feed Fort Collins and the northern Front Range that will appear in the Tuesday Life section.

#### ON THE WEB

- > Visit [www.coloradoan.com/csafarms](http://www.coloradoan.com/csafarms) to see a list of local Community Supported Agriculture farms
- > To learn more about Sylvan Dale Ranch visit [www.sylvandale.com](http://www.sylvandale.com) or call (877) 667-3999

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