

Announcer:

Bulletproof Radio, a State of High Performance.

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's guests are two gentlemen behind the Grass Roots Co-op, which is the highest possible standard for animal tracking and welfare for being part of our ecosystem and part of our food. They're both at home in Arkansas for today's episode, and we're going to talk about what's really going on in slaughterhouses, not from a shaming perspective, but from a hey you can't buy what you think is meat right now and why that's going on from people who have actually worked on disrupting that by telling you what's happening in your food.

Dave:

First guest here, Cody Hopkins is a physicist turned farmer and he's the CEO of Grass Roots Farmer's Co-op. Spent 12 years doing vertically integrated, sustainable livestock farming, and if you're a long-time listener you hear me mention my farm. Guys, I have a dozen pigs, a dozen sheep, I am nowhere near Cody's level at all on this or Andy's level, who's the CEO of Cypress Valley Meat Company in Arkansas who's a powerhouse in the meat industry, or at least the company is, and I guess you could say Andy is as well. I'm a tiny little farmer, I farm for my family and we sell the Asprey Farms meat in two small local community things to feed my neighbors. I have practiced this on a tiny scale, but I've done it for three years with my family. My kids do the work and I dream of scaling this up. I got two guys on the show today who actually have scaled it up beyond one family farm in the US. You're going to hear from Andy. Andy say hi so people see what you look like on YouTube or hear from you if they're listening.

Andy Shaw:

Hey guys.

Dave:

All right, and Cody say hi.

Cody Hopkins:

Hello.

Dave:

All right, so now you know their voices. This is cool because Andy actually works as an overseer in multiple USDA inspected processing plants, including the ones who service Grass Roots, major meat retailers and farmers, and private label meat that you probably have eaten if you like to go spend more than \$100 at a fine restaurant on world class steak. That's the processing side, and then Cody is the how you do raise an animal that lives a good life, eats clean food, is treated well from the time it's in its mother's womb, from the time it's weaned, if it even is weaned, and then until the time it makes its way to butchering and slaughtering. Yeah, you do slaughter animals before you eat them because otherwise eating them before they're slaughtered is really rude, but you do it ethically and cleanly and that is a part of the cycle of life. Guys, I'm honored to have you on Bulletproof Radio, thank you.

Cody:

It's a pleasure to be here.

Andy:

Thank you very much for having us.

Dave:

Cody, walk me through physicist, small farmer, doesn't compute here.

Cody:

I grew up in rural Arkansas, was the first person in my immediate family to go to college, went off and I happened to be good at math, and ended up majoring in physics and math. But always wanted to move back to rural Arkansas where I grew up. In the process of being in college and traveling a bit I also fell in love with really good high quality food being sourced from small scale farmers, food that you knew where it came from, you could get it fresh and that really made a big impact on me when I was young. Those two things came together in me moving back to Arkansas after I spent a few years teaching high school physics and math, and met my now wife and we were trying to find a way to create a living here in the rural Arkansas Ozarks, there's not a lot of opportunities.

Cody:

We thought we'd give livestock farming a shot. We were really inspired by folks like Joel Salatin and Michael Pollan in the beginning, and so in 2006 we kicked off our farm and we're looking at a pasture-based, grass-fed livestock, farm-focused on regenerative agriculture wanting to feed our community, create jobs, feed our family, and also improve the land in the process. It's a weird story I guess, it's hard to connect the dots but it's been a way for me to return to rural Arkansas and create a living and a life where we feel like we're having a big impact on our local community.

Dave:

I get asked this every time I post a picture of my little baby sheep, or I just posted a picture of a raw piece of bone-in rib eye, and it's got oregano on it but it's still raw. I'm like, "Guys, I'm feeding my family with this." I always get one or two very angry radical vegans going, "How can you slaughter your family pets?" Okay Cody, you had to go through this. You are a farmer, you have raised animals, you eat the animals themselves. How can you look an animal in the eye and then eat it?

Cody:

Yeah, so it's not always easy for sure, and my wife was actually a vegetarian at one point in her life. We actually have several employees on the Grass Roots staff who are either currently vegetarian or previously vegetarian.

Dave:

I was a raw vegan, it made me sicker than hell. It really messed up my biology and it has for tens of thousands of other people. Full disclosure for our listeners. It's okay if that's what you're doing.

Cody:

Yeah, yeah and it's understandable that people... When all you see is the industrial meat system it's understandable why folks would want to turn away from meat, but livestock have a really... Animals have a really important role in our ecosystem and livestock farming can do amazing things for the soil. I know we see so many stories about the pollution that's caused by livestock production, but done in a

small scale, appropriate scale where you're rotationally managing the animals, you can actually improve the quality of the soil, create more diversity and also more organic matter to help sequester carbon. Additionally, there's a lot of really important nutrients you get from eating grass-fed and pasture-raised livestock. I understand that we eat a lot of meat in this country, I actually am someone who thinks that we should eat a little less on average.

Dave:

Amen, yep.

Cody:

But better quality and that animals are really important to keeping really healthy ecosystems. Done in balance I think it's a fantastic thing, but it is, with life there's death and so there's always going to be some... Whether you're mowing a pasture and killing some insects, there's always going to be something dying. In our case we do harvest our animals. It's a sad day when they leave, but it also is a day to celebrate and we do everything we possibly can to prepare the meats to really respect the animal and make sure that we use the whole carcass.

Dave:

I actually did some math. I met a Tibetan monk in Tibet, a lama who ran a monastery, not an actual llama since we were a farming conversation today. No alpaca's either. I said, "Hey man, I've been at your vegetarian retreat and you tell me no killing but is that a yak skin on your prayer pole? You're a hypocrite." They like robust debates. He laughs at me, he goes, "No, one death feeds everyone." I was mind blown. You figure out your little tofurkey thing. The number of bunnies, turtles, and I mean you guys have lots of those big frogs down there in Arkansas, right? You run a tractor through your soybean crop and if it wasn't so poisoned that all the animals were dead in the first place you can pick up enough frogs legs to eat for a week behind a tractor, not to mention snake parts and turtles and bunnies and all that, it's nasty.

Dave:

You're sitting there going, "I have my cruelty free tofu." No you don't. You just destroyed an ecosystem. But if you have a grass-fed cow what else is going on in that pasture where the cow is? Assuming you're bringing a lot of grass in if you're rotating, what else do you see on the ground around the cow?

Cody:

Yeah you see earthworms, you see all kinds of diversity in the grasses, legumes and different grasses developing. When you manage it properly you create more life and more diversity in a way that's really exciting and actually makes a small farm more productive and better for the environment.

Dave:

I heard that. Joel Salatin was on Bulletproof Radio probably seven, eight years ago. It had some other regenerative agriculture people on over the time, Paul Stamets, but having really jumped in about five years ago we moved to this property. We restored the former five-acre gravel pit to productive soil, but watching where the pigs go, watching where the sheep go, and the explosion of life that comes from that. I am more committed to taking care of this. Three years ago I was one of the people who supported the XPRIZE carbon capture thing. This was a thing where a group of people get together, donate money and expertise to figure out how to capture carbon. All of the research for that was oh, we

have this amazing technology, it's solar powered and everything. It's called soil and it captures carbon better than almost everything, so we can make solar cells or we could have some animals crap somewhere and then we could capture enough carbon to save the world.

Cody:

Yeah, that's right.

Dave:

Oh and we're running out of top soil in 60 years because of industrial farming.

Cody:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), that's right.

Dave:

Do you have any metrics, Cody, from either your own farm or the network that you put together for Grass Roots that shows how much soil you're building while you're providing basically mail order access to this kind of super high quality trackable food? How much soil have you added back to the world?

Cody:

One interesting metric, we take soil tests about every year to see what our organic matter looks like and how it's improving or maybe not improving. It's been amazing watching over the years our soil organic matter, which is basically the fluffy brown part right there on top of the soil there right under the grass. The more you have of that the more carbon that soil can sequester. We've seen our organic matters go from 1.5%, 1.9%, up to almost 4%. One way to look at this is every percentage point that you increase that organic matter on an acre of soil, you increase that soil's water holding capacity by 20,000 gallons.

Cody:

Seeing we've increased a couple of percentage points on the acreage that we farm it really increases the soil's water holding capacity, along with carbon sequestration. We've seen the proof in those results, and you can also see it when you go out and you look at the grasses compared... You'd see bare spots before and now you're seeing completely covered... Our pastures green up sooner than our neighbors pastures. They go longer into the winter, our cattle look healthier, it's a different... There's all kinds of little proof points in what we're seeing on our farm every day.

Dave:

You're seeing it, you have more experience, you started in 2006. In my limited amount once we put up some fencing to be able to move the sheep from one pasture to another you went, "Wait, they're in that pasture because the grass is a foot and a half tall." Then the one where they weren't, even though I live in... In summers it's like paradise up here. The grass is a different color and it's so painfully obvious. I feel connected to the cycle of life. I used to live in Palo Alto. I traveled to New York and all over the place and I know how lucky I am to do that. I also know how inconvenient it is. I also know that the land is dirt cheap when you live in the middle of nowhere like you do and like I do too. There are advantages.

Dave:

But for people who can't do that I've been disturbed and one of the... There were global shortages of grass-fed butter because of Bulletproof Coffee and I've been saying, "If you're not eating grass-fed you're doing dairy wrong, you're doing meat wrong, and you're causing harm to the world, you're causing harm to yourself," and I believe that 100%. I do not eat industrial animals. I will be a radical vegan before I'll do that because it's bad for you. However being a radical vegan's bad for you too so you're damned if you do, damned if you don't. Grass-fed is your answer. You do it but now you go out there and there's people saying, "Oh it's grass-fed." And then you find out oh yeah, except they fed it a bunch of whatever to fatten it up and give it diabetes in the last 90 days of its life. Grass finished is important.

Cody:

Yep, that's right.

Dave:

Then you don't know if it was finished on GMO grass in a feed lot where they shovel grass in. What are your standards for that and then I want to switch over to Andy and talk about okay fine, it was fed right but what's going on in industrial slaughter versus small farmer slaughter and where the problems are. Okay first off, how do people know that they're getting something real?

Cody:

Yeah, so we've always had a deep commitment to being radically transparent with our customers. Our standards that all of our farmers follow are published on our website. We know that every package of meat that a customer gets they know exactly which farm it came from. We have a little QR code on there that they can trace, actually on a blockchain tower platform exactly where it was raised, where it was processed, how it was raised. The first thing is really trying to give customers as much information as possible so that they can make an educated decision on what they want and they can trust what they get.

Cody:

Additionally we bring customers out to do tours on our farms, open farm policies. There's a real commitment from day one on connecting our farmers. I'm a farmer, the farmers that are a part of Grass Roots directly with customer so that there's not this distance. If you go and buy a steak in the grocery store, unless you're buying from a local co-op you can probably buy something that came from a local farmer, but in most cases it's your stores you're selling to. In most cases most national chains there's no transparency or traceability at all, you have no clue even what country it came from in most cases. Really trying to shorten that... Make it basically where when a customer's buying they're buying directly from the farm, that's what they're doing when they're buying it from Grass Roots . On the grass-fed side when it comes to our beef, all of our beef is 100% grass-fed and grass-finished. They're being finished out on pasture, on grass, there's never any grain involved at all.

Dave:

How many different farms are a part of Grass Roots right now?

Cody:

Right now we're close to, we're 45 farms right now.

Dave:

Last time we talked you were at 27, so more and more are joining. Do they have to sign off on your list of standards for feed and all that in order to join?

Cody:

Oh yes, so we have a great partnership with a local non-profit, Heifer International. They do work all around the world but they have a domestic program called Heifer USA and they work with us, they have a training farm, and we partnered with them and we send our farmers there to get training, to do classes, to learn more about how to meet our production standards. Like a pipeline developed of new farmers or interested farmers, so they have to-

Dave:

They train them.

Cody:

They train them, that's right.

Dave:

Then certify them, and they they're like, "Okay, you can come in because you treat the animals well, you allow them enough time with their mothers," and all that kind of stuff.

Cody:

That's right, and then we have people on Grass Roots staff... We've very different. We're not going out and finding someone who's already established. We're actually training new farmers, helping new-

Dave:

Growing new farmers.

Cody:

Yeah, I mean that's one of our core missions is to help create the next generation of farmers. We work closely with Heifer to do that and that's a big part of our process. We don't buy from a farm that we haven't set foot on, so we have people out working closely with them and developed a relationship usually over a course of a couple years before we actually start purchasing from them.

Dave:

Thank you for doing that work. It's really hard and I was really blown away when we first started talking a couple years ago. I actually started buying your stuff when I do 40 Years of Zen, the neurofeedback five-day program. We're buying your bacon. It's really hard to get clean bacon. I grow my own bacon, I can't send it over the border so yours is the highest quality I could get and what I like is you can literally take a picture of each thing on your phone, the QR code pops everything you'd want to know about it. What made me really impressed by that was my own experience. Having gone through and like all right, I'm going to do a little bit. I don't have a dream of running a large scale grass-fed farm. I have a dream of being at one with the world around me and letting my children and my family experience that. Nourishing my local community, maybe growing enough for my little restaurant here.

Dave:

I was most concerned about slaughter, so when we had two pigs my wife's dad was going to come down, who's lived in a log cabin for 50 years and was like, "Yep, I know how to do that." Although he has more of a Canadian redneck accent. Also some Czech in there as well, but literally we were going to butcher the pigs on property and then put in the infrastructure necessary to really do the highest integrity, but then he couldn't make it over. So I went to the local meat processing house, and Andy we're getting into your part of the world, and I found there were two of them that were certified, maybe there were three at the time, on the island where I live. It's a large island, Vancouver Island, but now there's only two it was a couple years later. Only two small artisanal processors and I'm worried about that because one of them the guy's getting older and his kids don't want to run it.

Dave:

I'm looking at these people saying, "I want a sustainable job." You want a sustainable job, man start a small certified high integrity, high ethical meat processing plant and make some sausage and some bacon there and you will be incredibly wealthy, you'll be nourishing your society, you will be providing an active service, and you'll be able to look every animal in the eye and know that you're doing the right thing. That is my standard. If I'm not willing to do that, I'm not willing to eat it. I know that you guys do that Cody, but what I want to know is how the heck did you find a meat processor who would have that level of standard and track it because even now, I'm pretty darn sure that they gave me my pig back, but one year they didn't put the name of each pig on the package and I was so traumatized because I wanted to see which of the two tasted different.

Cody:

Yeah, well I will say so for years we actually processed all of our poultry on farm because we could not find a processor we felt good about. I will say that Grass Roots has had... It's been a challenge. The infrastructure to support small family farms doing what we're doing does not exist anymore, and so we almost went out of business because we could not find the right processor. We were using six different processors trying to find the right one and then I met Andy and it was someone who cared so much about animal welfare, about the quality, understood the importance.

Cody:

He'd been out numerous times on my farm, understands what we're doing and the importance of it, and we decided let's form a partnership together and launch a poultry processing business. Then we also partnered with him on his red meat plant too. It was tough, and I don't know if there are many folks out there like Andy, he's a pretty special person and it really gave Grass Roots a chance to succeed because of that partnership. You can't have meat if you don't have a really high quality processor and that's what we found in Andy and we were fortunate to do it.

Dave:

Andy, tell me about big meat. These big food processors, the big meat packing plants, we've been seeing all these things both in the US and in Canada about meat shortages, if you can call it meat. I'm going to be straightforward. If you're still eating industrial meat it's like saying there's a shortage of food because we don't have Snicker's bars, that actually isn't food. What's going on? Why is it so concentrated first of all, and then why are people getting so sick at those things? What's happening?

Andy:

Yeah, I think that when you look at what people have said in the past of being too big to fail I think we're seeing quite the opposite now. I think they're too big to stay continually in motion while all this is going on when you got that many employees concentrated in one location, it's almost impossible to keep everybody healthy and at work. I think that we're seeing the repercussions of having centralized food system right now.

Dave:

One of the things that does the big food industrial processors are famous for is crowding not just chickens. I went to college in the Central Valley in California and I watched when Tyson bought up all the turkey farmer contracts and all that and they're smashing all these animals into things, it was horrible. Some of my friends were in that industry and they were all like, "I can't believe this but we're going to go out of business if we don't give into that."

Dave:

I look at what they're doing but they also smashed their workers in similar things. They're bringing people in from outside the US quite often, which doesn't mean that those are people who are more or less likely to have a disease, but what it does mean is that if you have them living in a dormitory style thing with shared bathrooms, without a lot of space, and apparently this is happening a lot, the working conditions where you're crowded and then you're living close together because you're rotating people in and out like that. Is that a part of the problem here where they're smashing the animals together, they're smashing the people together, there isn't enough space, or is there more to it than that?

Andy:

Well I think that's a large part of it. I think having that many people in a confined space is very hard to manage. As Cody has highlighted the problems of industrial ag from a farming standpoint, there's the same problems that are happening in processing as well. I think anytime that you try to get that many people in, not only is the numbers against you and the volume of people that you're putting in a facility, but it's also hard to... Even the policies and procedures that are in place, it's hard to get everybody to follow those.

Andy:

When you're going in and you're having to send out blanket emails or you're putting up a poster by the time clock that's different than going and having one on one conversations with people that you care very deeply about and people that you know by first name. You know their wife's name, in most cases know their children, and you can come to them and say, "Look, we've got an issue here, we've got farmers that's coming to us that need to get their product to market." In most cases our workers know these farmers or a lot of these farmers, and so they're committed to these people to get their product out, and they're committed to know that they're feeding local communities and their own communities. They have a sense of ownership that they want to be there, they take pride in that and take pride in keeping themselves healthy.

Dave:

This idea of decentralized food production is very scary to large corporate interests. The idea that oh, people within 100 miles of where anyone listening to this lives might be growing animals in a way that protects soil. It's very hard to scale that up and roll it together and centralize it and grind down wages and all that stuff, and that the animals be of different quality. Then instead of trucking them all over the

place to a central authority where essentially all the animals get treated exactly the same, whether they're higher quality, lower quality, you mix it all together. Images that Pink Floyd, Another Brick in the Wall commercial, everyone's marching into the little meat thing, it's like that.

Dave:

That is exact opposite of what we're doing where you pair a family farm with a butcher, a slaughterhouse but you don't let the animals see each other get slaughtered, and you allow the animals time to calm down after the trauma of a truck ride. Not a crowded together truck ride across state lines where some of them freeze to death, which is not uncommon with industrial meat processing, but a ride down the road oftentimes towed by a pickup truck. When you have something like that, what comes out the end of that process is a very different thing and it's because the farmer cared, because he knows he's going to eat it, and he knows that his family and his community's going to eat it, and the person who does the work knows that as well. What's different? Do you pay more than a normal slaughterhouse to your people? Is there different training? How do they know to do this ethically? Do they have to meditate before they... Because down here in Arkansas they manage to meditate. What's different?

Andy:

We don't have required meditating yet, that's not a requirement yet, although they can if they would like. I think what we try to do is we do want to pay a living wage for sure but it's more than that. It's we want to teach a skillset. When they come in it's not that they're going to cut this wing off this chicken for the next 20 years or they're going to grind hamburger at this station for the next 10 years. We're going to come in and we're going to teach him about the industry, we're going to teach him how to bring this animal in all the way from when they're harvesting the animal, all the way through the process of fabricating it, cutting it into retail cuts for the consumer, packaging it, boxing it, learning the USDA regulations and guidelines.

Andy:

What we're doing is we're not trying to set a factory line, a position. We're trying to teach them a skillset that's very valuable and we want to give them an opportunity to grow. We want to invest in their lives and we want to see them succeed. It's from the farmer side all the way through the processing side. We want total integrity throughout the value chain.

Dave:

This is one of those things where okay, sometimes if you want it done right you at least have to learn it yourself even if you don't have to do it yourself. When I started doing this I went out to one of the local slaughterhouses and I said, "All right guys, I need you to teach me how you do what you're doing," and I spent a whole day there. I wish I had some good video of this, this was a few years ago.

Andy:

Love to see that.

Dave:

I went out there, all right this was before we even got our animals. I said, "All right, I actually want to be able to... Show me how do you harvest a sheep." If I'm going to be willing to do this let's do it. I'm buying sheep from a neighbor but they're already pre-cut up. Then they said, "All right, here's how we do it.

Here's how we skin it. Here's how you take it down to a band saw." I can tell you it is damned hard to cut up an animal in a good way. When I say cut up an animal in a good way, okay it had to be butchered ethically. Both of you can tell me, what happens if you basically... I think you used the word harvest. If you kill an animal that is in terror, what happens to the meat?

Andy:

If it's stressed it's certainly going to be... You're going to have color variations and it's not going to be nearly as tender.

Dave:

Yeah it gets tough and it tastes bad. That said, I've seen videos at industrial slaughterhouses at scale, they have machines that do this and they do not care if an animal is scared. There is no compassion, there's nothing good there that I can possibly say and facing that I'm not eating that. It's unethical to do it on every level from an animal level, from an environmental level.

Dave:

The mission that I'm working on right now is look, because that's evil going to the exact opposite is I'm never eating animals again, you will get sick, your children will be less healthy. The number of people who are less fertile will go down over time and we will slowly grind away the soil on our planet and we will not like what happens. The only thing left is for there to be more people like you Cody and more farms like yours. At the same time, farmers like you, like me, like your network, I will not send my animals to an industrial slaughterhouse. I do not want to do that. I will not send them 100 miles away from my house because I care about my animals, it's not okay. You have to have decentralized slaughterhouses. Andy, what do you say to the regulatory people saying, "Well that might not be safe." Now's your chance to say what you really think about that. Don't worry, they're not listening.

Andy:

That's right, I cross my fingers. I'll pay for this on Monday morning. No, it starts out with you talked about with how the meat is treated and the quality on the processing side, but also the quality that it comes in. That also goes to food safety. When Grass Roots brings product in they're bringing in extremely high-end, high-quality product. They're also bringing in a very safe product. We're not getting in animals that are covered in feces or have been sitting knee deep in mud for extended periods of time. These animals are coming in clean. We've got lower bacteria counts on these animals as they come in, so it makes our job a whole lot easier.

Andy:

With that being said, we've got a lot more time on the processing floor and the harvest floor to be able to address that. We've got interventions in place that are all natural interventions that are in place to address that but we're having to address a lot lower microbial load on those animals because of the grower standards and practices of Grass Roots and farmers like that. I think that when you look at the volume that goes through our facilities, when you're looking at less than 100 animals, 100 beef a week or 100 hogs a week, we've got less than 20 to 25 people in the large animal plants. You look at that and you put those in the facility and it sets us up to succeed in a way that's really difficult when you're in contrast to a large facility doing beef where you're looking at over 5,000 head a day or you're looking at hogs over 20,000 a day.

Andy:

It's totally different line speeds, there's an investment from our team and our employees that can be there that can't be found in a plant going that fast.

Dave:

One option is we make all the workers of those plants wear astronaut suits in case they might come in contact with each other's cooties or any of the antibiotic resistant bacteria that are coating all of the food. I mean it's not food but the animals that they bring in because of the rampant antibiotic use and the fact that they're feeding them corn and soy and grains that are not useful. That is one path, and if you do that... I don't know which of you guys would have the better take, what's the average price in the US for a pound of ground crap of beef?

Andy:

Well on today's market it's over \$4 a pound right now on the current commodity markets.

Dave:

Commodity markets so at a grocery store people are going to spend about \$4 a pound or are they going to spend \$5 a pound because of the Styrofoam plates and all that?

Andy:

Yeah, I would say \$4 to \$5 right now, yeah.

Cody:

[crosstalk 00:32:52].

Dave:

Okay, so you're listening to the show-

Cody:

That's a real high right now given the shortage, yeah.

Dave:

Well there's 40% of our meat capacity just got taken offline because people are getting sick.

Cody:

Sure, that's right.

Dave:

That does say that the people who are working in industrial slaughterhouses are generally unhealthy. That could be because they're paid below a poverty wage and poverty is associated with not being healthy, there's that. They're overcrowded and they're constantly exposed to animals covered in unhealthy bacteria because of what they ate and all the antibiotics they had. That is a job that is a rough job and it's rough long shifts, crowded sleeping quarters, it is a recipe for humans to get sick as well as

for animals to get sick. We lost 40% of our capacity so the price of meat's gone up. Before the pandemic we were at about \$3 a pound?

Andy:

Probably less, \$3 at retail probably.

Dave:

At retail, okay. Got it, so we got a 25% increase. All right Cody, Grass Roots Co-op. I want to get some ground beef, a pound of ground sent to my door, grass-fed, raised by a farmer who knew the animals name and worked with the animal and an ethical butcher processed by Andy. You can look at the entire chain and you know it's got the right fats and has no antibiotics. All of those things how much does that cost?

Cody:

About \$10 a pound.

Dave:

So wait a minute, you're saying I'm going to go from \$4 a pound, maybe \$4.50 to \$10.

Cody:

Yep.

Dave:

It's roughly twice as expensive to eat.

Cody:

It is yep.

Dave:

Ethically raised grass-fed beef that's supported a living wage for a group of people, grew soil.

Cody:

Yep.

Dave:

It seems like you're underpriced.

Cody:

Okay, yeah.

Dave:

I say that, okay Super Human just came out, it's my anti-aging book. Everyone's eating too much protein, you don't want too much protein. You don't need as much meat. Here's the deal, if you're listening to the show, I've been saying this for more than 10 years, it's in all of my books. People have lost a million

pounds or more on the Bulletproof Diet, I'm not kidding. Eat half as much meat and pay twice as much for it. If you do that you will save your own biology, you will live longer, you probably won't get cancer, your skin will look better, you'll be happier, and you'll support your entire community. You'll support ethical treatment of animals, you'll support soil, you'll support jobs, and if you instead say, "Oh I'm going to save money." I know money's tight and the bottom line is seriously, replace the other half of the meat with other things that are cheaper than meat and there's lots of them.

Dave:

If you do that you will immediately receive your personal health dividend from that, but your long-term I'm going to call it the karmic impact of what you're doing, you will cause less suffering in the world than eating a fake meat substitute product. I mean this from jobs, from other life forms like cute bunnies and turtles and all that stuff. There is zero downside and the fact you're eating less meat because it's more expensive will only make you live longer, but if you go down to zero meat bad news. It's a U shaped curve, you're going to fail on either end. That's it, it's twice as expensive and it's worth it. You can spend more at a local artisanal butcher and you might want to do that, too, which is what Cody does. Cody he'll ship you from Grass Roots Co-op, he'll ship you the meat and it's world class and right now you probably have to cook at home anyway but support your local butcher. If you have a local butcher still you're lucky.

Cody:

Yeah, we're all for that, yes.

Dave:

Keep that guy in business.

Cody:

Yeah, we're definitely all for that and we're definitely all for eating better quality and less meat too, that's definitely a position we have. I think that people's health will benefit from it and so will the environment and local rural communities especially.

Dave:

Your budget should be the same for meat as it was before, but you will change how you feel. What's best for small farmers? There's poultry, which is one side of it they grow very rapidly and they... Okay, I'm going to be real straightforward, they shit everywhere, birds are nasty.

Cody:

Fertilize, fertilize.

Dave:

Sorry, I don't like chickens, I like turkeys, they're better.

Cody:

Yeah, yeah.

Dave:

Okay, and then of course there's pigs, and the pigs are actually very interesting animals and they're actually low maintenance. I really enjoy pigs and properly fed pigs are very healthy and improperly fed pigs are very dangerous. If you're listening to this show, industrial pork is the number one meat to avoid because pigs have the same weaknesses humans have in that they use their kidneys instead of their liver to process toxins so they build up nasty stuff in their fat. If you were to splurge on one organic grass-fed properly done thing. I would tell you if you're going to eat pork eat Grass Roots pork but do that instead of eating crap bacon somewhere because your health impact will be even higher there.

Dave:

You got chickens, you got port, you got grass-fed beef. I don't think you guys do lamb, right?

Cody:

We do a little lamb, some lamb.

Dave:

A little bit, okay good deal.

Cody:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dave:

From a farming perspective, what do farmers like better? I only have experience in a couple of those.

Cody:

Yeah, so I think it depends on what their land is like. We encourage diversity so there's actually a nice symbiotic relationship between birds, whether it's chickens or turkeys, and herbivores, lamb or goats or beef. On our farm we have every species. We have chickens right now on the pasture, turkeys on the pasture, pigs in the forest, cattle out on the pasture grazing. With some farms, if they're smaller farms they don't have enough acreage for beef, for instance. Sounds like your farm it's a little bit smaller, lamb work out better for something like that.

Dave:

I couldn't do beef. I could have two cows, yeah.

Cody:

Exactly, exactly, and so it depends on your land base. Some farms we're actually starting to work with a cooperative of farmers in Mississippi right now. They're in the training phase and they have land that's well suited for pork production. They have these great pine and oak forests that are going to be perfect for raising forest-raised pork. It's not ideal for raising chickens, the topography's not right. Really it depends on the topography, the land base, and ideally you're finding ways to add multiple species so that you can really benefit from the symbiotic relationships. It makes the farm more efficient, you're able to do more soil building when you have that diverse mix of species rotating across. Really trying to make it the most natural environment possible.

Cody:

For us our pigs are mostly in the forest on our farm. They do a bit in the pasture but they roam through the forest where they get acorns and hickory nuts and different berries certain times of the year. They get paw paws that fall of the trees in the fall, and then when they rotate through our forests they're opening up that forest and you get grass growing underneath. It's a great way to utilize a part of our farm in a way that is really creating a better quality healthier animal, the pork chops are amazing, and then also improving the biodiversity in the soil at the same time.

Dave:

When we moved to our place the land had been abused. There was a gravel pit on the front that's now a gentle sloping grassland after a lot of tractor work and topsoil building, but the forests also all overgrown and crappy. I didn't not understand how expensive it is to have humans go through with chippers and stuff to try and clean up a forest, or you could fence it off with temporary electric fencing and throw pigs in there and they turn it into a park. It is ridiculous how healthy a forest is when it has animals returned to it other than deer.

Cody:

Yep, I totally agree.

Dave:

I think most people are... You would have no way of knowing this unless you heard it on the show because why would you care, but the idea of forest raised pigs. Hold on, you're helping the forest, grasses in the forest, it's magical what happens there.

Cody:

Yeah it is, yeah.

Dave:

The side effect is happy pigs, and at the end of the day meat.

Cody:

Yep, yep.

Dave:

Now, what do these small farmers, the ones you work with in your network, how worried are they about the Coronavirus? How affected are they by it?

Cody:

Well I think the concern is what they see in the news around supply chains shutting down. Working with Andy and as he's highlighted already, the crews that... Just the buy-in he has from his employees. When you're a smaller plant like that you're able to be much more nimble. You don't have the bureaucracy of having to get 6,000 employees up to speed on something. We're talking about 20 to 25 employees, and so I think there are concerns around that.

Cody:

We're taking extra caution on the farms around bio security, making sure when people come on they wear a mask or have booties on. Really trying to be careful, but for most farms it really hasn't... We're usually practicing social distancing anywhere. We live out in the middle of nowhere, not a lot has changed except that Grass Roots is seeing an increase in sales and so we're able to give these farms more business and bring on new farms. That's really right now the biggest change for us has been overwhelming customer interest at this moment. People being at home, wanting to cook more, caring more about... Health is really taking a... It's clear, people are being more health conscious at this time and taking this seriously.

Dave:

The farmers where I'm at, I don't see a lot of people other than a few local community people because I live on a farm and it's not like you're in a metropolis. I haven't noticed the things. I wear the mask when I go to the hardware store every now and then mostly because it looks goofy, but even then social distancing would be very easy. They're all experiencing that but I guess they're experiencing this increase in demand, and I guess I saw that as well. We're almost sold out of our pork for the first time because people are like, "Oh you have pork? We want pork." It's an underground pork economy here. Increase in demand, why do you think that's happening now. Is it Coronavirus, is it because more people are home cooking so everyone's going to Grass Roots and saying, "Look, if I'm going to cook I would like to be healthy right now. It's a good time to do it." Or is it more of an environmental awareness maybe it's time to take care of the world and myself? What do you think it is?

Cody:

Yeah, I think it's a mix of all those things. I do think a big chunk of it is people they're cooking more, which is super exciting. It's amazing how much better the world would be if we were all cooking a lot more at home. I mean I'm all for restaurants but cooking at home versus going to Wendy's that's a good thing for the world. People at home when they're cooking they're splurging a bit more and they're focused more on health and we're definitely seeing that. We're selling more chicken backs for stock right now, people are really... We're seeing more-

Dave:

Bone broth, yeah.

Cody:

Yeah, bone broth is really something that people are craving right now and for good reason. There's a lot of nutrients packed in there.

Dave:

You know what drives me nuts? One of the large powdered bone broth protein brands, I'm not going to call them out. Bulletproof makes collagen but we don't do a bone broth thing like that, bone broth protein. Dude, it's from industrial raised chickens. Industrial raised chickens. You don't want to eat those bones, they're full of toxic metals and they're full of antibiotic residues. Man I wouldn't throw one of those in a stock pot. Frankly this is going to sound really egregious but I wouldn't feed those to my pigs because it would make my pigs sick. I don't want to make my pigs sick and I don't want to make the people who eat my pigs sick. If I was starving that would be a different animal, but I'm not starving. I'm looking at this is part of my food chain is part of what my kids eat, and so you can make an industrial

waste processing into that, but I'm not alone because people are saying I'm going to order chicken backs and I'll make my own broth, which is kudos to you if you're doing that.

Dave:

By the way, if you're listening to this and you do that, you're saving a ton of money over food delivery. By the way, please use the food delivery too so the restaurants will still be there after the pandemic, and if you order from the Bulletproof grass-fed café in LA on delivery thank you for that as well. By the way, six years of running a restaurant that has never served anything but grass-fed 100% of the time because I believe in this. Anyway, I'm rambling a little bit there but your belief on their motivation is some health, some extra cooking, some environmental, but you don't have a dominant answer for that?

Cody:

Yeah, no I think it's a bit of both and I think that we're definitely seeing an incredible uptick. I also think people it's convenient too. I mean it's a safe way. You can order online and ship straight to your door. I also think that other places are experiencing outages in a way that I do think there is a growing awareness of the vulnerability of our meat supply chain, especially at the processing level. When one company or one plant produces 130 million servings every week, it's producing 5% of the country's pork, that is a scary position to be in and I think people are really waking up to that right now.

Dave:

It's not okay.

Cody:

Yeah.

Andy:

One interesting thing, too, as Cody mentioned is there's lack of supply on the grocery sales and some of these people are defaulting to this product and trying it out for the first time. Maybe they wouldn't have otherwise, and I think when they get it goes back to what you talked about earlier, is the difference in the quality of this product. When they get that in and they try it for the first time and maybe they would have never done it otherwise, I think it's going to be interesting to see how many people notice that, realize what a difference there is, and stay with it.

Dave:

Thank you for saying that. There's something I learned going from weighing 300 pounds and on the journey of Bulletproof. My big diet book came out in 2014 explaining this grass-fed thing and helping people understand how big it was. I call it a food high but we're used to food high like I had pizza and beer and I'm lit up, but that's a jangly feeling. When you eat a pastured pork belly that's cooked right. Not deep fried and burned and too much, or you eat a grass-fed rib eye where the fats yellow because it ate so much grass, about 20 minutes after you eat that... I don't know the right word for it but there's this feeling I feel in my chest. It's like you're bursting with this good energy. Not coffee, not sugar, it's a different thing. Your body's like, "Yes, that's what I needed."

Dave:

I tell you, if you're listening to this and you've never had good quality, grass-fed, grass-finished meat, you cook it right, don't burn the crap out of the outside of it, don't put cheap barbecue sauce and ketchup all over it. Treat it with respect in your kitchen, be careful, you're going to have a different night after you eat that dinner. You will have different dreams, I'm not even kidding. That is the difference in what this food does for you. To your point there Andy, people will try it and they're going to get that food high. My goal, and I think we hit it most of the time in Bulletproof Café place down in Santa Monica. Every time someone comes in I want to give them that thing. We work hard on it, I don't know that everyone feels it every time but the quality matters and it gets integrated into the way you show up that day and the next day.

Dave:

I got a question for you then Andy. Help me understand in comparison. You got Cypress Valley Meat Company. How many employees do you have compared to a big old meat packing industrial facility? What's the percentage there?

Andy:

Well across all our locations that we have, including poultry, we're under 100 people at all locations. When you look at one location having several thousand I mean that really puts it in perspective. The largest facility that we have is on the poultry processing side in terms of employees and there's 55 there that work over two shifts, and so it's a huge contrast to what you see in industrial processing.

Dave:

Industrial processors look like factories. There's giant parking lots and shuttles, people coming in.

Andy:

Exactly, yeah, and that's what they are. You're right.

Cody:

I mean 6,000 people in some of the beef plants that have shut down. It's a small town.

Dave:

All right, let's talk tech. I'm a Silicon Valley guy and I remember reading the very first white paper the year it came out around bitcoin and in another life I used to teach early classes on encryption for the first wave of ecommerce at the University of California. I read it and like, "Oh my God, this guy's a genius. I understand, I see it all works." Then I thought to myself, "You know what? It'd be really cool to setup a laptop to do some bitcoin mining, but seriously I'm starting this Bulletproof thing and I've got two young kids, whatever." I only had one young kid at the time. I'm like, "This is cool but it's one thing I'm going to choose not to do."

Dave:

I still regret that decision, but here we are not that many years later and you are actually using the blockchain, which is not bitcoin, it's the distributed ledger part of it but in meat processing, which I would have thought if you'd told me that five years ago that you were stupid and you were following some industry trend. I know how it all works, but is there really a demand for this? But I was wrong, so tell me why you chose to use blockchain in food production and why people actually care.

Cody:

Yeah, so it initially goes back to what I was talking about earlier around our commitment to transparency and that's what this was born out of was a desire to be as radically as transparent as we possibly could. In our search, our passion for that and our journey to be as transparent as possible, we came across a company based out of the UK called Provenance and they had developed a blockchain powered platform that was developed for supply chains to help create more transparency across that supply chain so that you could trace the journey of a product all the way from start to finish. In our case all the way from the farm to the processor to the customer's plate.

Cody:

What really drew us was that commitment. When I first stumbled into this I'd heard of bitcoin, but didn't really have any clue, hadn't learned much about blockchain. When I was able to start digging into this and read more about Provenance's platform it was clear that a distributed ledger like this where you can take information, records, and store them in a publicly displayed way that's also secure and can't be corrupted or someone can't go in and change the data, really stuck with me and was something that resonated and we wanted to implement that. We were the first meat supply chain in the country to really roll this out all the way to where when a customer gets a package of Grass Roots, a rib eye or a package of ground beef, they can scan that package, the QR code, and they can trace the journey all the way from farm to fork learning about how it was raised but also where it went each stage and do that all at a blockchain powered platform.

Dave:

How do you know that someone doesn't put the QR code tied to the blockchain on the sticker and then put some crap meat in the package?

Cody:

Well that's a-

Dave:

I'm just...

Cody:

Yeah, so I think part of this is having a... You build a network of trust here where you've got farmers... Farmer takes the chickens, they log in the information and they drop it off at the processor and the processor uploads that information and confirms the receipt. You get this consensus base, a chain that where over time you're able to... It takes all this information, presents it to the public where anybody can see it in a way that really discourages any misbehavior or fraudulent activity on this front. It's not a silver bullet, but it is a great way to create a... If you could go in and trace and see every piece of chicken or beef you got in the grocery store or every apple, trace that, that would make... It'd give consumers a lot more information as to where their food's coming from.

Dave:

It does and it sounds like the real answer is an unscrupulous processor could do that, but then let's see. They put cheap meat into an expensive meat package but they can't take the expensive meat that they would have stolen and do anything with it except eat it. Because if they sell it as expensive meat they

have no provenance for it, so then they would have to sell the expensive meat as cheap meat. It is self-limiting that way. Part of it though is that it would probably be cheaper for an unethical producer to say, "Oh yeah, yeah and randomly throw crap meat into the good packaging," but that's why you would never go to an industrial scale producer. That's why I wanted to have Andy on this show here because look, we have a tight partnership and Andy went to the trouble because he cares about okay, this animal comes in, that means it has to be tracked throughout the slaughterhouse. How much more time does it take to do that versus a parts a part? Is that a-

Cody:

Yeah, well so I think one thing that's really interesting or different about us is that when you go to a larger processing plant they have, say chickens for instance, they have chickens coming in from all different farms on one given day. They mix all that together. Ours are actually batched individually by farm, and so there's a lot. Andy can speak to the extra work but we've always kept the individual farm, the day it was processed, that's all one separate lot that gives a radical level of traceability because of that. Otherwise when you go in and get a pound of ground beef, I've read that it can be 1,000 different animals in that one. We do single animal origin grind where you can trace the exact... You know exactly which farm produced that, what day it went in and where it was processed.

Dave:

I remember when I was a kid the idea of eating hamburger anything more than medium rare was horrifying. Ew that's burned, it's all gray in the middle, why would you do that? Then at some point in my late teens actually why would you eat a hamburger that wasn't gray throughout because it's probably going to get you really sick because we basically poisoned our food chain. I have returned to eating meat medium rare because all of my beef comes from the same animal. I know because I buy half the cow, or it comes from the lamb and I raised it when I held it when it was this big. It's clean meat and I know that it's butchered well because I've been there and I would do the same thing. I'm sure that your FDA standards say, "Oh meat must be cooked 156 degrees, whatever." I don't have to say that but you might have to say that on the label. I feel safe.

Dave:

When I'm in the states I order Grass Roots when I'm staying [inaudible 00:57:46] and I cook it and I cook it medium rare or even rare and it's a different thing. You can only do it when it's single animal, not when it's that high pressure industrial beef wash that they do now. It's frankly horrifying. What about things like broth? Andy I mean it would be really easy to take the bones, the beef bones and make a value added process product like grass-fed broth and all that. Is that something you've talked about doing or Cody? Or is that a next step? Who does that? What do you do with the bones?

Andy:

Yeah, I think right now a lot of times we're taking and selling the bones and letting the customers make the broth. In the future we want to add those type of value added products to what we do in our processing schedule.

Dave:

I'm interesting in that because I want to make it so that people who decide they want to run a business like yours, it is meaningful investment but you got to make enough returns that okay, it's sustainable so your kids want to do it or your investors want to do it so it's an attractive business. Because it's almost

like why do we pay our teachers nothing and why do we pay the really important parts of our food chain so low, it's backwards. It feels to me like broth and bacon and sausage are really the ways where people are willing to pay more for it.

Dave:

Demand for sausage that I'm seeing... My market size is zero, but we sell out of sausage really fast here and people want to pay more for it, and we grow all of our own spices here anyways so it's like, "Okay, next year I'm putting pretty much everything that's not a premium cut into sausage because it tastes good and it actually makes a little bit more and I can use that to help pay the people on the farm who help out on the farm." It works out, so it feels to me like you guys ought to... Cody work with your farmers, work with your processor, get us some broth, get us some good sausage, get us some good bacon. Value up [crosstalk 00:59:42].

Cody:

That's actually our next step, so Andy's right on the cusp of doing an expansion to add some of these things in.

Dave:

You are?

Cody:

Yeah.

Dave:

I'm all in.

Cody:

Send some of those investors Andy's way.

Andy:

That's right, that's right.

Dave:

Do you have a URL? If people are like, "I want to know-

Andy:

Yeah, you can look at CypressValleyMeatCompany.com or Natural State Processing, they both have websites for both the large animal processor and the poultry processor.

Dave:

Okay, got it and so that's in... Both in Arkansas, so if you guys want to find that, you're interested in it. It sounds like you're willing and able to talk to people. I want to see a small number of meat processors, not more than the market will support, spread out across the country. It's as important as having grass-fed, is locally processed grass-fed meat and it's how you break the big food meat monopoly. That's the

stuff that's driving animal cruelty and driving habitat destruction and driving animal shit in water and all that kind of stuff. You guys are fighting the good fight against that and the only way we will survive our 60 year horizon for having soil on the planet is more of what you're doing. That's why this matters. Thanks for the work you're doing guys.

Dave:

I'm all in on it, and now that I have an amateur level of experience that you guys have scaled up, I know how hard it is but I know how rewarding and important it is and what a sacred act it is to take a life like that and make it part of the ecosystem and all that and to be respectful throughout the entire lifecycle, including to when you ship it to someone's house and it becomes a part of their life. I am truly grateful, but a little bit in awe of the level of planning and detail and execution that you guys have done to scale because I struggle with it for a few sheep. Thank you man. To be able to live in a big city and order that, it's something very special and something very new in the world. If we were to lose our local processors, we'd lose our local farmers, that's not the kind of world I want to live in. I want you guys to keep doing what you're doing and do it even bigger.

Andy:

Absolutely.

Cody:

Yeah, thanks a lot.

Dave:

On that note, Grass Roots Co-op, you're listening to the show. You've probably been listening for years or maybe you're a brand new listener. I'm going to tell you what I think right now and I'm going to tell you two things. One, if you're not eating local grass-fed from a local farmer across the street or at your local farmers market, then you need to go to Grass Roots Co-op and you need to try it once. Don't burn the crap out of it, don't put some weird bottled spice mix, whatever on it, do some real herbs and some quality salt and all that. Cook it to the best of your ability and look at how you feel two times. A half hour after you eat and then the next morning when you wake up. You look at yourself in the mirror, you look at your muffin top and go, "Wait, I don't have the muffin top I would expect. I don't have the heavy feeling. I don't have the sore joints." That's what happens when you eat food that's good for you. Expect that food high.

Dave:

Do that and it's also going to taste better. Because it's grass-fed and pastured you cook it a little bit less. It's a different product so you go a little bit light on that because it has a different composition. That's your challenge for this week is eat something that is grass-fed and really good. If you're a vegan, guys I was a raw vegan, I can mash up an avocado like no one's business. I was a very, very good vegan cook. It gave me autoimmunity, I did lose weight, it made my teeth fracture, it gave me a thyroid condition, I got oxalic acid poisoning, I got more sensitive to lectins than I was before, it disrupted my gut bacteria. 100% plant based diet is as stupid as 100% industrial diet, neither one is functional for you so go out there and try what I'm saying, one meal and watch what happens.

Dave:

If you're one of the ethical vegans out there you look at what we talked about on this show, you look at the package, go visit Andy, go visit Cody, heck if you're on Vancouver Island I'm probably not around for a farm tour but I will tell you straight up, you visit that local farmer and you look at it and you realize that if you look at the number of deaths per thing there is no ethical argument for you to be 100% vegan. There is a great ethical argument for you to save the planet by building soil and you have to build animals into the world. From that note, grassfedcoop.com. It matters on every level aligns. Physical, spiritual, environmental, all of it and these guys have done it right. If you don't believe them you can actually look at the provenance of where it came from. I don't know a way to do this any better and if I ever do I'll tell you that, but right now this is the best.

Dave:

On that note, thank you for listening. Thank you for learning. Stay safe during the pandemic and eat some really good food you cook yourself because now's a good chance to do it. See you on the next show.