

Style Spotlight~Bison Living “The Good Life”



By Ellen Dugan

Watching the bison at Don Edmonds' Bison Ranch and Hay Farm in Lancaster is like traveling back in history to a time when these majestic creatures populated much of the American West. Back then, bison were so numerous you could ride for 60 miles in either direction and still not see

the end of one herd.

Today, although the big herds are long gone, bison are thriving. Nowhere is this more evident than on the Edmonds' farm in Lancaster. Here, life is good. In exchange for wearing a yellow herd management tag in its ear, a bison can eat its fill of grass and hay, enjoy pumpkins, squash and greens on occasion and graze in a

beautiful, non-feedlot setting.

With the arrival of spring, the Edmonds' herd is alert. When Don arrives to check on them, they trot over at a fast amble to meet his truck. They are capable of running 30 miles an hour if they're scared or motivated, but they know him and don't feel compelled to run. Perhaps he is a father figure?

Certainly he treats them with care and respect as he pats one on the top of the head.

“This is Cocoa,” he says. “Here, see how gentle she is.”

Cocoa inches closer to the fence. She is huge, maybe 1,200 pounds. Her large, dark eyes focus on Don's fourteen month-old daughter Valerie, safe in his arms. Several of Cocoa's friends come to the fence too. They are curious but not

as brave as Cocoa. Their young calves stand warily behind them.

Valerie, happy to be outside, squeals with delight. She looks at Cocoa, then up at her dad. Slowly, her tiny hand reaches through the fence and touches the fur on Cocoa's neck. She pats Cocoa's head twice. Then she pulls her hand away and looks up at her dad for some kind of signal. Her expression is clearly asking, have I done a good thing?

Don beams. “She's getting used to the animals,” he says. “They have distinct personalities, you know, and we've named some of the cows. And, well, I try not to get too close to some of them,” he says, “for obvious reasons. You have to respect your animals, all of them in this business.”

As if to emphasize the word “respect” a tremendous bull named “Big Guy” eases over to the fence, watches every move that Cocoa makes.

Bison may appear sluggish, possibly dim-witted or even docile, but according to Don they are equipped by nature to do maximum damage to an opponent. “You don't want to get between two bulls when they're fighting,” he says.

Don and his wife Kim have been operating Edmonds Farm on Ottoman Ferry Road in Lancaster since 1997. He was drawn to the business because it is a healthy alternative. “We do not add hormones or antibiotics to our meat,” he says. “That would defeat the whole

purpose.” He notes that bison meat is naturally low in fat, cholesterol and calories. “It's lower than beef, pork, chicken or sockeye salmon, and it tastes great,” he says.

Currently Don and Kim have 80 grass-fed bison. They specialize in premium steaks, quality roasts, ground meat, chili, sloppy Joes and BBQ as well as a variety of sausage and jerky. In addition to bison meat, Don and Kim have now added pork products as well as Muscovy duck and eggs to the farm's selections.

“This breed of duck has a lot less fat on it,” says Don. “And its eggs are denser. My clients use the eggs for baking and they say they're great.”

Ordering products from Don is as easy as a computer click

or telephone call. His website is: www.edmondsfarm.com; his phone number, 804-580-0351. Delivery of orders \$100 or more in Lancaster County is free, and Don will work with you to arrange pickup times and places on smaller orders.

Currently his bison meat is featured on the menu at Broad Appétit and Café Gutenberg in Richmond. It's also available at the Irvington Farmer's Market; in Virginia Beach at the Old Beach Farmer's Market; and in Richmond at the South of the James Market and Forest Hill Park Market.

If you've never tried bison, the Edmonds also have cookbooks for sale, and there are cooking tips on the website. “There is so little fat in ground bison that you don't need to drain it when you're making tacos,” says Don. At this news daughter Valerie smiles, then reaches for the bison jerky stick her dad is unpeeling. It's full of protein, not at all messy and oh so good!

Photos by Ellen Dugan.



Free delivery to Lancaster County for orders of \$100 or more.

Edmonds Farm

BISON RANCH & HAY FARM

Bison

The **HEALTHY** Red Meat

Our meat is hormone & antibiotic free.

Owned and operated by Don & Kim Edmonds.
We raise grass-fed Bison and free-range hogs in Lancaster, Virginia.

Available for sale

- Premium Steaks
- Quality Roasts
- Bison Ground
- A Variety of Bison & Pork Sausages

Visit us at www.edmondsfarm.com
To view a complete listing of our products

Come See Us At:

Helping Hands Festival - :
Susanna Wesley Methodist Church - Gloucester
April 17th (rain date 4/24) 8am-4pm

Irvington Farmer's Market: (starts in May)
The first Saturday of each month 9am-1pm

Yorktown Market Days: (starts in May)
The forth Saturday of each month 8am-12pm

The USDA has determined that bison is lower in cholesterol, calories and fat and higher in protein and nutrients than beef, skinless chicken, pork or fish.

We now have:

Items are available for sale from our farm.

Call or email us for appointment & availability.
804-366-4730 sales@edmondsfarm.com

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