

M&G Burgers serves local, grass-fed beef

Marin Independent Journal Article

Nancy Isles Nation

Article Launched: 03/18/2008 05:39:42 PM PDT

One of Marin's oldest burger joints has teamed up with Marin Sun Farms of West Marin to serve its locally grown grass-fed ground beef in Fairfax and Larkspur.

M&G Burgers, which started in Fairfax in 1962, recently became the exclusive supplier of grass-fed beef patties at its drive-in at 2017 Sir Francis Drake Blvd. in Fairfax and at its two-year-old store at 989 Magnolia Ave. in Larkspur.

The agreement works to the advantage of both, providing M&G customers with the high-quality products they prefer and giving Marin Sun Farms a local client who can use the beef it produces as a by-product after butchering steaks for restaurants and farmers' market customers.

Marin Sun's beef is raised largely at David Evans' ranch at Point Reyes Station and at neighboring facilities under agreements with grass-fed beef producers in Marin, Sonoma and sometimes Mendocino and Humboldt counties.

"It's a constant teeter-totter in the meat market," said David Owens, owner of Marin Sun Farms. "Every time you have an animal butchered for a tenderloin, New York or rib-eye, you have a huge pile of ground beef."

Much of the meat that is ground is chuck or other muscle groups that are not as popular in the market as the premium cuts. Marin Sun Farms uses virtually all of the product when it butchers, including scraps that are produced as pet food.

Mark Escobar, who has owned M&G Burger for about 10 years, said he has tried to keep up the tradition that has made M&G a part of the Fairfax

fabric, but chose to update it with high-quality produce, heart-healthy rice bran oil that he uses for frying instead of trans fats, and, now, grass-fed beef.

The burgers sell for \$3.70 with lettuce and tomato, or \$6.70 with the addition of fries and a large soda.

"We are trying to integrate more organic products as the supply becomes available and the price points make it work," Escobar said. "We are much happier with the grass-fed - it is slightly more than what I have been paying but it's a far better product."

Evans sells about 1,000 pounds of ground beef each week in the county and also supplies the ground beef for Stanford University.

"It's something we have a surplus of," Evans said, adding that he makes a point of keeping his prices

competitive. "It means more steaks at the farmers' markets."

Marin Sun Farms' beef is not certified organic by federal standards, but Evans said his products are produced locally in small amounts in an organic environment.

M&G has a loyal following of customers who appreciate the quality standard Escobar has embraced. Chuck Hanley, a telephone company contractor from Sacramento, said he stops by the Fairfax restaurant every time he is in the area.

Meghan and Maddie Kelly, 12- and 9-year-old Fairfax residents, brought their grandmother, Susan Meinerth of Boston, to the drive-in for burgers Tuesday afternoon.

"I've heard the hamburgers are very good here and this was our choice," Meinerth said. "I think it's good that it is sourced locally."

Contact Nancy Isles Nation via e-mail at nnation@marinij.com

