



B.C. Trinity Ranch targets the beef customer of the future

Young ranch family builds with a clear focus on marketing basics

There are not many marketing fundamentals more basic than those and they are the foundation of the future for the young family owners of Trinity Ranch at Hixon, B.C.

Producing beef was always a dream of Natasha and Urs Reichlin. While Urs had spent some time working on farms, Natasha had no direct farm experience. Both had a longing to be involved in food production and to raise a family on a farm.

Land in the native Okanagan area was out of reach financially but a beautiful spot at Hixon on the highway heading north to Prince George proved to be “perfect” and a little over seven years ago Trinity Ranch was born. Fifteen cows that first year have grown to 80

calving this year and two young children have added to the dream team.

Designer customers

“We have always had a belief in producing beef as naturally as possible, things like grass fed, well cared for animals, environmentally sustainable production,” says Natasha. “We feel that more people today want to know where their food comes from and that’s the market we have gone after.

“We didn’t want to do the conventional beef operation where calves are sold the traditional way, so our focus has been to develop a brand for our beef and sell direct to the end customer.” That value-added strategy would help them reach financial goals without having to grow as large.

Growth in customer direct sales has been slow and are still a small part of the business. Remaining calves from their Angus Simmental herd base go through the auction service.

“It has taken us a while to get the meat processing side established,” admits Natasha. “We had to find the processors who could process the beef the way we wanted, manage regulations and get the timing and delivery process down. But we have that figured out pretty well now and are set for growth in the future.

The customer base that will pay for that quality has been a bit slower to develop in their northern area of the province, but it’s coming, she says. As

an example a store recently opened in nearby Quesnel catering to that clientele.

“The big thing on people’s minds is food safety. With food recalls showing up more frequently in the news, people want confidence in their food.”

Building the brand

A core part of building their Trinity Ranch brand has been to get involved in industry programs, says Natasha. That can often help securing funding offered. An Environmental Farm Plan sets a baseline of environmental management. The Verified Beef Production (VBP) program does the same for on-farm food safety.

“It’s important people understand that we are passionate about our program,” she says. “Our customers love the idea of VBP. It’s another sign of how we are doing things and that the product is safe.”

VBP provides very useful management information. Proper handling of drugs and proper injection techniques provide confidence in doing things properly.

“It has been a simple process to be involved in VBP and it is a big part of our brand from meat products to our website at www.trinityranch.ca,” says Natasha. “I think some people may be scared off by the idea of an audit of what they are doing on their operation, but it really was so simple and seamless and we never felt threatened in any way. We were doing most of the things anyway and we learned some useful new things as a result.”

