

## Meat and potatoes: N.D.'s foundation feast

by Carmen Devney

**T**roubled by the increasing obesity problem among his patients and the U.S. population, Dr. Robert Atkins learned how eating certain foods while limiting refined carbohydrates caused a person's body to burn fat. This discovery ultimately led him to create the Atkins Nutritional Approach, which consists of seven nutrition principles that are designed to help people make the right food choices so they can reach their weight-loss or weight-management goals. One of those principles is eating "good" carbohydrates.

When the Atkins diet swept the United States, many people confused bad carbs, such as refined breads, cereals and pastries, with good carbs found in unprocessed fruits and vegetables. Good carbohydrates are important because they protect against cancer, heart disease and other illnesses, and contain important vitamins and minerals. In addition, carbohydrates are the only dietary source of fiber.

Keith Bjorneby, Minto, a third-generation potato farmer and member of Nodak Electric Cooperative, says the potato took a hit when the Atkins diet soared in popularity. He indicates potatoes are a nutritious and satisfying vegetable — and that the health concern lies not within the potato's carbs, but rather in the way the vegetable is prepared.

"It's not the spud's fault," Keith jokingly points out. "It's the stuff we love to top them with that can pack on the calories."

Keith's great-grandfather emigrated from Norway to the Hoople area, and Keith's grandfather started Lone Wolf



Fourth-generation red potato farmers in the Red River Valley, the Bjorneby family grows, harvests and stores potatoes. The spuds are later shipped to wholesalers and grocery stores all over the country. Their family farming business also produces wheat, barley, soybeans and sugar beets. Pictured above are (left to right) **Josh, Molly, Claire, Keith, Anna, Emma and Chris Bjorneby.**

Farms in Minto in 1938. Keith's father, Dean, is still active in the farm's operation, along with Keith's sons, Chris and Josh.

Both sons attended a satellite campus of the University of Minnesota in Crookston, Minn., and earned degrees. They sought their education with the intention of returning to the family farm and carrying on the red potato legacy started by their great-grandfather.

"It's great to be able to carry on the family business," Josh shares.

Living in the Red River Valley, the Bjorneby family agrees they have some of the richest soil in the country for growing red potatoes. According to the Northern Plains Potato Growers Association's Web site at [www.nppga.org](http://www.nppga.org), North Dakota potato farmers produce more than 2.7 billion pounds of potatoes annually. That means the Red River Valley of North Dakota and Min-

nesota is generally considered the third-largest potato-growing region in the United States.

One reason Keith says his farm's red potatoes are so popular may be the economy.

"People can save a little money by eating out less when times are tough, and potatoes are one of the cheapest foods you can prepare at home," he estimates. "Everyone's lives are too fast-paced. It's time to get back to having the family sit down and eat supper at home."

The next time readers want to couple the potato with a home-cooked meal, *North Dakota LIVING* urges them to prepare the potato's best friend: beef! Meat and potatoes have been the foundation of family feasts for centuries.

Nancy Jo Bateman, executive director of the North Dakota Beef Commission, says beef is more lean and nutritious today than it was even 30 years ago because of the care ranchers take with cattle genetics, feeding and breeding.

"Beef is a nutrient-rich meat choice packed full of nutrients including zinc, iron, protein and B-vitamins, and all of these nutrients are packed in a three-ounce cooked serving that has less than 200 calories," she explains. "While I certainly may be a little biased, all these great nutrients in beef seem to be just an added bonus to the mouth-watering flavor we get when we bite into a succulent piece of beef."

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### EASY BEEF STEAK DIANE

- 2 boneless beef top loin steaks, cut 1 inch thick (about 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> pounds)
- 1 tsp. grated lemon peel
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> tsp. pepper

**Sauce:**

- 1 T. vegetable oil
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> pound small mushrooms, sliced
- 2 T. shallots or green onion, finely chopped
- 1 T. brandy (optional)
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup half-and-half
- 1 T. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp. Dijon-style mustard
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce

Heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add mushrooms and shallots; cook and stir 3 minutes or until tender. Remove. Wipe skillet with paper towels; spray with cooking spray. Heat over medium heat until hot. Combine lemon peel and pepper; press onto beef steaks. Place steaks in skillet; cook 12 to 15 minutes for medium rare to medium doneness, turning occasionally. Remove; keep warm. Add brandy to skillet; cook and stir until browned bits attached to skillet are dissolved. Stir in half-and-half, lemon juice, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Stir in mushroom mixture; heat through. Carve steaks. Serve with sauce. Yield: 4 servings.

Courtesy of the N.D. Beef Commission

### BJORNEY'S TWICE-BAKED POTATOES

- 4 medium potatoes
- 1 T. minced onion
- 1 tsp. salt
- Paprika
- 1 8-oz. package cream cheese or sour cream
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cup milk
- Pepper, to taste
- Dried parsley flakes

Wash potatoes and pierce with fork. Bake at 400 degrees until tender. Cut hot potatoes in half lengthwise. Scoop out potato, leaving skin intact for restuffing. Whip potatoes with remaining ingredients, except paprika and parsley, until fluffy. Scoop back into potato skins. Sprinkle with parsley flakes and paprika. Bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Yield: 8 servings.

*Editor's note: Created by Joleen Bjorneby, this recipe is a family favorite. Keith indicates this side dish is often prepared in celebration of Thanksgiving or for other large family meals.*

Courtesy of Lone Wolf Farms

For the last 25 years, the Bright Ideas column has featured reader submissions on a variety of topics ranging from how to pinch pennies during a tight economy, to how to grow a productive garden or how to clean using vinegar. We never knew vinegar had so many uses.

North Dakota LIVING has learned so much from you, our faithful readers, and we thank you for sharing your advice and creativity!

While household hints from readers have been a solid staple in North Dakota LIVING for most of the magazine's 55-year history, we have received precious few "fresh" ideas over the past year. That's why North Dakota LIVING is making the transition from Bright Ideas to Healthy Hints — a professional column that will share inspiring guidance and focus on health.

We've asked Julie Garden-Robinson, associate professor and food and nutrition specialist with the North Dakota State University Extension Service, to share her experience and knowledge with readers. A few of the interesting topics Julie may write about in the months and years to come include appetite management, strength training and stress reduction.

One of the many reasons North Dakota LIVING is the state's best-read publication is because of dedicated readers who have shared pieces of their lives. While we will miss the Bright Ideas column and the chance to hear from our readers, we look forward to welcoming Julie and learning how to improve ourselves through Healthy Hints.

As always — may your gardens thrive and your vinegar help things shine. ■

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Along with the succulent taste, Bateman says another benefit of eating meat is that the beef industry in North Dakota is the second-largest agricultural business in the state, second only to wheat.

"Our state's beef producers take great pride in their cattle, their ranching heritage, and the land of which they are stewards," she concludes.

Originating in 1973, the North Dakota Beef Commission conducts beef producer-funded programs of promotion, research and education, which are designed to increase demand for beef in the state, nation and across the globe.

For more information on the commission, visit [www.ndbeef.org](http://www.ndbeef.org). To learn more about Lone Wolf Farms, visit [www.lonewolfarms.com](http://www.lonewolfarms.com). For more fun and educational potato facts, visit the Northern Plains Potato Growers Association's Web site at [www.nppga.org](http://www.nppga.org). ■