

RANDALL LINEBACK COW



# Rare Breeds

Rejecting the factory-farm model, a growing number of farmers are rediscovering heritage livestock. And changing the way we think about food



by FRANCINE MAROUKIAN

photographs by ERIC KIEL



*"It isn't about going back. Rather it is about redefining farming, using the lessons of the past and the acquired experience as we go along"*

descendants from a closed herd, a tiny genetic time capsule. "Using our grandparents' farming methods wedded to twentieth-century discoveries in husbandry, we have created the first substantial modern herd," he says. Henderson now bears responsibility for roughly three hundred of the four hundred-plus Linebacks left in the world.

"When you choose an endangered breed, no one really knows what the animal is good for because there are so few," he says. "You have to be careful you don't fall in the trap of raising these animals just because they are endangered. To make the critter economical enough for other people to want to raise them, you have to find it a job, and that job must be respected." To that end, Henderson now supplies a small network of chefs with the commitment and technical skill to transform every part of the animal into food. "In working with these wonderful local chefs, we also found that Randall calves produce the best veal in the world, which we call Rose Veal due to the rose-red color produced by the open-pasture diet and outdoor living." His primary chef connections are currently in the Washington, D.C., area. But he has a plan to continue the breed's survival by expanding slowly to create geographically separate herds. "Once we attain roughly a thousand cows in five or more metropolitan areas, we'll save America's colonial cow," he says, "the same cow that saved America by hauling cannons to George Washington's army outside Boston in 1776." 🐄

#### THE RESTAURANTS

Maryland: *Black Market Bistro* (Garrett Park); *Black's Bar & Kitchen* (Bethesda); *VOLT* (Frederick)  
Virginia: *BRABO Restaurant*; *the Majestic*; *Restaurant Eve* (Alexandria) Washington, D.C.: *BlackSalt Fish Market & Restaurant*; *Blue Duck Tavern*; *Brasserie Beck*; *Charlie Palmer Steak*; *Marcel's*; *Poste Moderne Brasserie*; *Proof*

For more information on the history and status of heritage breeds, contact the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, [albc-usa.org](http://albc-usa.org).



## Joe Henderson

CHAPEL HILL FARM

BERRYVILLE, VIRGINIA



RANDALL LINEBACKS ARE the country's colonial cows, a result of mixing European breeds to meet New World conditions. A multipurpose breed historically used from blustery New England down through the moderate Mid-Atlantic, the cows were crossed with common breeds such as the Holstein in the early twentieth century, and the lineage virtually disappeared. But Joe Henderson's cattle are direct