

## Ramblings - Cow Dynamics

It's fiesta time in Tanjay and for the past few days, there already have been the usual festivities. Tomorrow, we decided to host a feast for our close kin, so what better way than to butcher a cow, in addition to the traditional lechon. Besides, our daughter and her two small kids are visiting from NY/NJ so this farm stuff is new to these city slickers.

When we started raising cows in the farm 4 years ago, we bought 7 females and periodically called in the agri-vet gov't rep to AI (artificially inseminate) those that go into "heat". Later, the agri-vet loaned us a Brahman bull to be a stud to all these females, including other neighboring cows, provided we take care of the bull. There's a stud fee of P200 that our farm hand (who takes care of the bull, among other chores) collects from the neighbors. I sometimes fancy myself running a cow brothel.

We now have 16 cows. The later calves obviously must have had happier mothers during conception. I keep extensive records of the cows, with pictures and names and dates of birth and possible conception data. Picture below is dated 1/14/11 and is that of our 2nd purchased cow, named Lovely, with her newborn calf dubbed Eping, the first male calf. He was the last to be conceived by AI on 3/24/10.



There were earlier calves born but were female.

Since females are retained to sire more offspring, the males are the first to go when mature enough.

Poor Eping got to reach this stage today. About 120 kilos plus in weight, and 1-1/2 yrs old. See right photo.



Traditionally, a cow owner may loan out his cow to some farmer or cow herder at some remote place, and this caretaker gets to own the first offspring, then the owner gets to own the next, etc, and they alternate. Female calves are made to propagate more. But for the males, say after 2-3 years, the mature calf can be sold for about P25,000 or more, which is not bad, especially since the cows merely graze on the land. We know of a doctor who has about 60 cows in the boondocks with this arrangement.

Tanjay City's abattoir processes about 5-6 cows a day, and the meat is inspected, marked as approved, and sold in the market. Cow owners have different arrangements of disposal. If we had availed of the abattoirs facilities, we would have had to hire a "cow carrier", a modified tricycle, pay a nominal fee to the abattoir, then market or divvy up the meat. Since our cow really is relatively small, and we need the meat mainly for home/fiesta consumption, we decided to hire a butcher to do the operation right there on the farm's cow shed. We had the other cows brought way out of sight during the procedure. Being right on site, we could direct the butcher to make all the specialized cuts, which we could then classify and store the extra meat in the freezer, after divvying up what was needed for tomorrow.

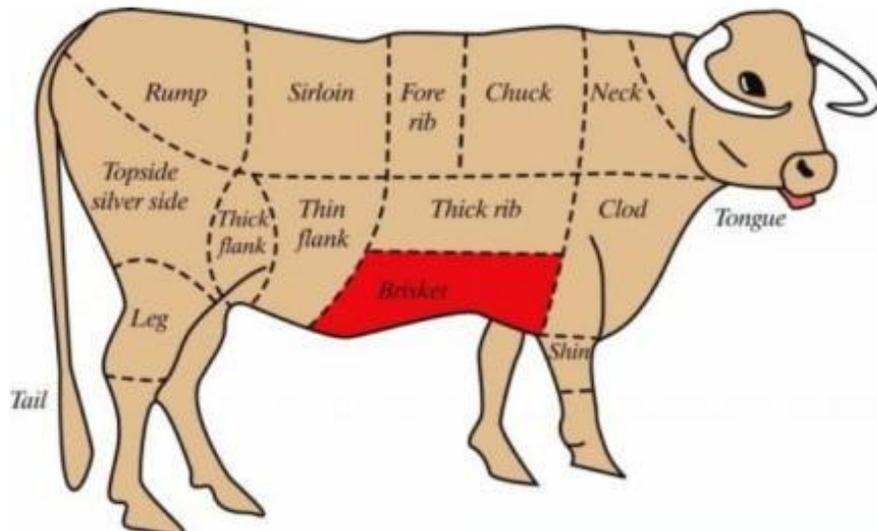
Furthermore, we are not commercial, the land is ours, food supplement is ours, and we pay the farm hands a salary. So theoretically, all the cow's proceeds are ours.

But nevertheless, we gave to the farm-hands/caretakers 1/3 share of the meat. Besides that, they are excellent cooks, and they would process the hard-to-cook stuff like the tripe, viscera, and other specialty dishes (local terms: "paclay", "bus-uy", etc) for the fiesta.

We didn't of course bring the kids to the farm today. We actually missed the process, as we came in after the butchers had done their thing. We witnessed the carving up of meat, and for some, it would be gruesome, but that's the way farm life is.

Following are some selected photos. On the right is the stomach, yet to be processed. You can imagine the rest. And to know what portions are to be segregated and classified, we went high tech and pulled from the internet a diagram of a cow chart, on the next page.





But farm talk is matter-of-factly, and oftentimes raw, and between the butcher, our farm hands and us, the talk got to be about the more exotic anatomy: such as what to do with the skin, head, brain, viscera, hoofs, tongue, lungs, tail, reproductive organs, etc. This is not all shown on the chart.

Soup #5 is made from a certain male anatomical part, a well known delicacy and a reputed aphrodisiac. I told them to retain that part for us.

The female counterpart is reputedly good to loosen the tongues of children who are slow in talking.

Below is Lisa directing the butcher. That's only part of the meat spread out on banana leaves on the floor, mostly ribs. The sirloin, chuck, leg and rump portions already were loaded in the van.



Above photo is at the house, where further sorting was made. Even after separating all the needs for the fiesta tomorrow, and packing up more portions for our cousins and maids to take home, there still was a lot left over from the 70 kilos net from the cow. Not bad at all, considering this was all organic meat. We wrapped, then labeled them before storing in the freezer, as shown in next photos.



Later this afternoon, we'll go off to see the parade, then the horse fight event, and later the evening program at the plaza.

Needless to say, the soup #5 was delicious this noon. But only I ate it.