



Good Steaks, Good Spirits

During the 2019 National Angus Tour, Bently Ranch flipped the typical ranching paradigm upside down. No stone was left unturned during the Nov. 1 tour of the four branches of the Bently business: cattle, compost, distillery and butcher shop.

by Lindsay King

It's as easy as one, two, three. That's how Bently Ranch makes their multifaceted ranch appear. This vertically integrated operation starts from the ground and reaches the consumers' plates — and their whiskey glass.

Each Angus Convention provides attendees the opportunity to explore a unique operation. This year was no different as the Business Breed traveled west to Reno, Nev.

Set on the east side of Lake Tahoe with the Sierra Nevada as their only

barrier, this Minden, Nev., operation is perhaps the driving force behind a now-booming town.

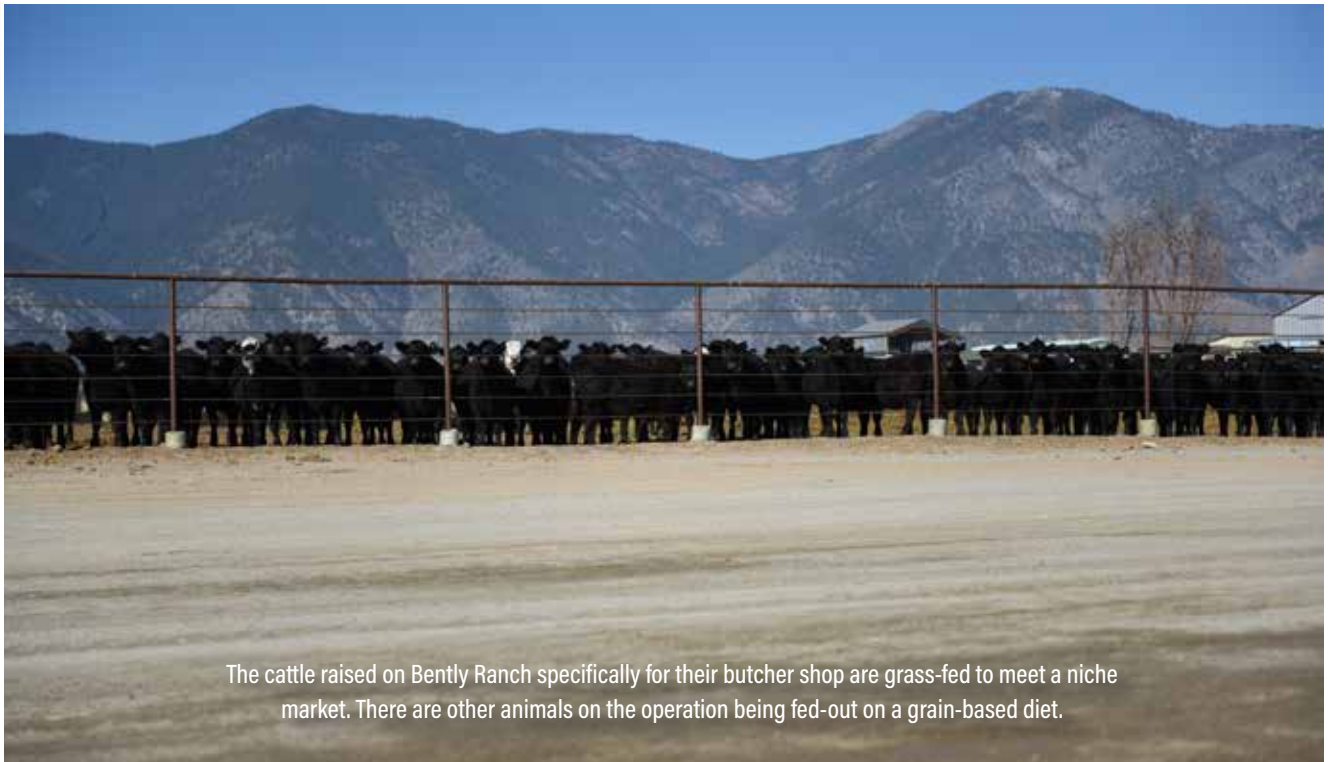
Both the Bently butcher shop and distillery are hotspots in Carson Valley, just four miles down the road from the ranch headquarters.

“Vertical integration is a really simple process for us, but it's also more of a passion,” said Woody Worthington, Bently Ranch sales and marketing manager. “We want to control every step of the process all the way through in both the distillery

and our butcher shop.”

When Chris Bently took over the day-to-day operations from his father, Donald, vertical integration became a main goal of the entity. The 50,000-acre ranch houses grass-fed beef, row crops and an intricate composting system that's open to the public.

“People in this area enjoy knowing where their food comes from and what the company is doing to sustain the environment,” Worthington said. “It's nice to be makers but also marketers and tell the story.”



The cattle raised on Bently Ranch specifically for their butcher shop are grass-fed to meet a niche market. There are other animals on the operation being fed-out on a grain-based diet.

The story

This arid climate is drought personified, which makes irrigation a pivotal aspect of Bently Ranch. Harboring more than 30 pivots, management and conservation are at the forefront of the operation.

“We try to reuse everything we can, from the spent grains at the distillery in our compost to the water on our crops,” said Matt McKinney, Bently Ranch general manager. “We really try to close that circle of vertical integration.”

Roughly 75% of both the bull battery and cow herd are black Angus. A majority of the herd is grass-fed, lending themselves nicely to Bently butcher shop customers.

“We still handle all our cattle horseback,” said Tod Radelfinger, cattle division supervisor for Bently Ranch. “We do almost everything in those traditional ways. We spend a lot of time chasing the grass since we are here in Nevada.”

Traditionally at Bently Ranch, first-calf heifers stay on the ranch through the winter while the cows head out for greener pastures in northern California.

Everything about Bently Ranch offers transparency. Large tour buses making their way through the ranch aren’t an uncommon sight. In fact, they’re welcomed.

“It was very interesting to see what Bently Ranch does to produce all of their products and how they recycle their byproducts,” said Elizabeth Perkins from Green Garden Angus, Lorraine, Kan. “There are definitely ways that you can put together systems to make things more profitable, or less costly.”

The Angus Convention and National Angus Tour annually

present a unique operation to attendees.

“One of the highlights of Angus Convention moving around the country is the opportunity to look at ranches in different areas of the country,” Perkins said. “They have different challenges as well as different advantages, and it is neat to

see how you can take some of those home and either implement them on your operation or just have a better appreciation for the cattle business.”

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The latest addition to the Bently Ranch lineup is their home-grown distillery. Housed just down the road from the ranch headquarters, the distillery uses crops raised on the ranch for its soon-to-be signature liquor offerings. The distillery is just one more way Bently Ranch is bringing everything full circle in their vertical integration plan: even the spent grains are repurposed either as cattle feed or back into the composting system.