


BY MARTIN LIEBERMAN  
 PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM DANIELS



Working on a ranch  
 builds skills that  
 will serve you well.

# home on the RANGE

**work in progress**

## WHEN CARTER WILKINSON GRADUATED

from college last year, a conventional career path held little appeal, so he packed up his things, moved West, and got a job on a dude ranch. Wilkinson is no dyed-in-the-wool cowboy. An American studies major at Williams College, he grew up in Pelham, New York, less than an hour from New York City. He's not a big fan of country music or horseback riding. But like many of the twentysomethings who work on dude ranches every year, Wilkinson has an appreciation for peaceful, western living, one that began in 1979 when his family started spending their summer vacations at CM Ranch, near Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Wilkinson decided to work at CM the summer after his freshman year, and has done so ever since. "I like this type of setting a lot more than the city. It's laid-back and easygoing."

Adds Russ Wheeler, 29, a former political campaigner and now the baker and pastry chef at Laramie River Ranch in Colorado, "When you come

to a dude ranch, it's more relaxed. You live here with your coworkers and they become your family."

For many people, a dude ranch brings to mind Billy Crystal and his buddies leading cattle through the Plains. While there are ranches that cater to that sort of thing, most ranches today are "guest ranches," places where people can go for weeks at a time to ride horses, fish, hike, hunt, and get a taste of western life, complete with campfires and square dances. Some ranches even boast features like golf