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RAISING RADICCHIO'S PROFILE WORLDWIDE

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Siri Erickson-Brown first fell in love with radicchio while she and her husband were working on farms in Europe in the early 2000s.

They ate a lot of the red winter vegetable while in Italy, where it is commonly grown.

Erickson-Brown was intrigued.

“What is this weird vegetable that everybody says is so hard to grow?” she recalled wondering.

Radicchio is a leafy chicory, often used to add color to salads.

And, by all accounts, radicchio is an acquired taste. It's bitter, which means customers need some education and recipe examples from chefs, said Laura Lewis, who runs Washington State University's Food Systems Program.

“You may not necessarily want to have a straight-up radicchio salad,” Lewis said. “But there are some beautiful radicchio salads that you mix with things like citrus.”

Erickson-Brown compares radicchio to a hoppy beer, dark chocolate or coffee — the taste is hated by kids but loved by adults.

“It starts out as something that seems horrible, but then it's your favorite thing,” she said. “Radicchio is like that.”

Getting organized

Radicchio proved to be an important crop in 2007 when Erickson-Brown and her husband, Jason Salvo, started their 15-acre farm, Local Roots Farm, in Duvall, Wash.

“For a farm that grows 40 different crops, to have 1 acre dedicated to just one is a little unusual,” Erickson-Brown said.

She and Salvo sell radicchio for \$3 to \$5 per head. They grow roughly 14,000 heads in a good year.

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RADICCHIO AT A GLANCE

Radicchio (*ruh-dee-kee-oh*) is part of the chicory family.

Though it's been around since the 1500s, the most popular red variety, Chioggia, was bred in the 20th century.

A winter crop, it originated and is still widely grown in Italy, which has a climate and latitude similar to the Pacific Northwest. It overwinters in the field and holds well in storage.

— Wikipedia



Shawn Linehan
Culinary Breeding Network
Pacific Northwest radicchio farmers saw all aspects of growing, packing and marketing the crop during a January 2020 tour.



Local Roots Farm
Farmers Jason Salvo and Siri Erickson-Brown of Duvall, Wash., are helping lead the formation of the Pacific Northwest Radicchio Growers Association. They've been raising the crop for 15 years,



Both photos by Shawn Linehan
Culinary Breeding Network
ABOVE: A radicchio field in January. TOP PHOTO: Radicchio is the focus of a new effort to spark interest in the vegetable from farmers, chefs and consumers.

Lawsuit names Easterday Ranches in misappropriation scheme



Tyson Foods seeking more than \$225 million in damages

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

PASCO, Wash. — Tyson Foods is suing an Eastern Washington beef supplier for allegedly defrauding the company out of more than \$225 million by falsifying records and submitting faked invoices for more than 200,000 cattle that, in fact, did not exist.

The lawsuit was filed Jan. 25 in Franklin County Superior Court, and

accuses Easterday Ranches, based in Pasco, Wash., of perpetrating the scheme over a period of several years.

Easterday Ranches is part of the larger Easterday farming operation, which also grows 25,000 acres of potatoes, onions, grain and forage in the Columbia Basin.

The lawsuit maintains that in meetings with Tyson Cody Easterday, the farm's president, admitted to the fraud, which it says he constructed in order to offset more than \$200 million in losses incurred in the commodities trading markets.

Easterday did not immediately respond to messages for comment.

FOR A RELATED STORY PLEASE SEE PAGE 11

“Over the last several years, Defendant (Easterday) has submitted false invoices to Plaintiff (Tyson) for reimbursement, identifying cattle that did not exist; has requested and received reimbursement from Plaintiff for feed that was not in fact purchased; has submitted fictitious inventory records to Plaintiff; and has otherwise schemed to defraud Plaintiff in a way that has caused Plaintiff losses in excess of \$225 million,” the lawsuit states.

Tyson Foods is the world's sec-

ond-largest processor and marketer of chicken, beef and pork. The company does not own or operate feedlots, but employs buyers in beef-producing areas who visit independent feed yards and public auctions to buy animals for its processing plants — including one near Pasco, which Easterday Ranches supplied.

Tyson entered into a cattle feeding agreement with Easterday Ranches in 2017. In a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Tyson reported that Easterday provided

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Vilsack advanced by Senate Ag Committee

Committee hearing reveals what to expect from Vilsack's second round at USDA

By **SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN**
Capital Press

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Senate Agriculture Committee Tuesday unanimously advanced to the full Senate Tom Vilsack's nomination to return as head of the USDA.

Vilsack, 70, was also agriculture

secretary under President Barack Obama's two terms. The former governor of Iowa has been a key adviser to President Joe Biden, who nominated him to lead USDA.

“It's not lost on me, ironically, that this is Groundhog's Day, and I realize that I'm back again,” Vilsack told senators Feb. 2.

Vilsack said that if he's con-

firmed, many of his priorities will remain the same as when he served under Obama, but others will change.

“This is a fundamentally different time, and I am a different person and it is a different department,” he said.

Vilsack said his four priorities will be climate change, food inse-



Tom Vilsack

curity, competition and inequity.

Senators in the committee — some in person, others calling in virtually — asked Vilsack dozens of questions over the 2 1/2-hour meeting. Vilsack's answers gave a

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