



Up Front

Looking south for the American West.
By C.J. Hadley

Hola! It was my first real vacation in 18 years, since the birth of RANGE. It reminded me of home; not England, where I was born, but my adopted choice, the United States. It felt like the '50s, with residents welcoming me with huge quantities of beef, cheese, hugs and gifts.

This holiday was not about lolling around. I wanted to learn about Argentina, one of the biggest beef-producing nations in the world.

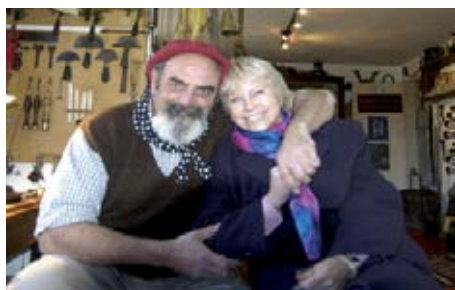


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lands for Angus cattle. Its Angus bulls have won many prizes. Of Maria Isabel's six children, two of her sons, Polilla and Marcos Maglione, run the estancia. Polilla is the farmer; Marcos the rancher. Their late father Sr. Maglione was a pioneer in the area and the Maglione/Baiocchini history is deep.

Real-estate tycoon Carlos "Fangio" Aimar drove me hundreds of miles across the Pampas at breakneck speed. At the wheel of an Audi, his only English is: "Audi better than Mercedes!" Without conversation but with enormous good humor, Carlos shared a million pink flamingoes, red deer, calden trees, estancias, campos and charcoal ovens...and a lovely lunch with his family in Rancul.

I spent time at La Rural, a huge ag show in Buenos Aires, with fine artisans, the country's best livestock, and gaucho events. Sadly, all photos from the show are lost in the ether,



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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The graceful and athletic Argentinian dance—tango. > Armando and C.J. in Pergamino. > The glorious queso, as in jamon y queso—Argentina's favorite sandwich, ham and cheese.

I spent my first morning at the Mercado de Liniers in Buenos Aires, one of the largest stockyards in South America. Several million cattle move through Liniers each year. It was midwinter, pouring rain, agonizingly cold. Auctioneer and buyers moved quickly on covered catwalks from pen to pen, each sale approved with the strike of a hammer.

People I didn't know fed and housed me. My money was useless. Maria Isabel Baiocchini and her family at the estancia La Margarita, a vast estate on the Pampas near Rancul, opened their arms. They killed a cow the day before and, for dinner, barbecued steak on an outside grill in the middle of the night (at least to me). We ate after nine and Argentina's best champagne still flowed past midnight. The beef was grass-fed, not aged, unseasoned, and the tastiest meat I can remember.

La Margarita has 45,000 acres, 25 windmills, fields of soybeans, winter wheat and alfalfa, a flock of sheep, and windswept grass-



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as are most from the estancia La Margarita.

I took a bus to Tandil, in the hills to the south of the capital. I headed north to Pergamino, where Armando Deferrari and his family

spoiled me rotten. Armando is one of the world's best rawhide braiders. His workshop is a gaucho museum.

Everywhere I went—except for the sublime experience of a tango show—had something to do with bovines or equines. The problems in Argentina for beef producers are much the same as here, but years behind. Pressure on agriculture; a heavy-handed government; environmental arrogance.

My trip was short, cold, but close to perfect (see photo essay, page 48). The people are passionate, generous, extroverted—proud to share their country and customs and eager to hear about ours. Visiting Argentina is like the first sight of the rural American West. A twinge to the heart for the people. A mighty ache for the place.

Hasta luego, mis amigos. ■