

## Looking for a low-fat feast? Try ostrich

By C. J. REWICK

**L**OOKING FOR a thick, juicy steak that won't clog your arteries? How about a burger leaner than ground turkey? Or maybe sausage patties that won't raise your blood pressure?

Steven Warrington of Elmwood Park can connect you with such heart-healthy fare—if you're willing to dine on the wild side.

The meat in question isn't beef or lamb—it's ostrich, touted by industry insiders as the "healthy red meat."

"I use the ground for spaghetti sauce or chili," said Mr. Warrington, owner of Ostriches On Line, a company that exports ostrich products via the Internet. "We sell a lot of snack sticks. They're high in protein and low in fat."

So low that ostrich has earned a "Heart Healthy" label from the American Heart Assn. It's 99% fat-free and has 60% fewer calories than beef.

Mr. Warrington's African black domesticated ostriches are farmed in England, Australia and several African countries, and he says they're 100% hormone-, steroid- and antibiotic-free. They're fed a diet of alfalfa grass and corn and raised free-range.

All of which is reflected in the price. Ground ostrich sells for about \$6 a pound, roughly twice the price of lean ground beef. Ostrich steak costs \$10 a pound and fillet about \$14.

But Mr. Warrington's customers, many of whom are health and fitness buffs, are willing to pay the price.

They either buy directly from him or from a local Jewel or Dominick's—most stores carry this exotic fare in the frozen food section.

"It's not in high demand, but it's certainly of interest to our customers," said a Dominick's Supermarkets Inc. spokeswoman who'd given an ostrich burger a try. "It tastes good, but it doesn't taste the same" as other burgers.

Those in the know say it tastes a lot like beef but caution chefs to cook it more like veal. Because there's almost no fat, ostrich doesn't shrink when it's cooked, and it dries out more quickly than other meats.

Docile and inquisitive, ostriches grow to about 8 feet and 300 pounds, and they can sustain a 45-mph pace for more than half an hour, Mr. Warrington said. But they neither bolt nor cry nor bury their heads in the sand—which he said is a myth, anyway—when it's time to go to market. They simply take it in stride.

He began his business two years ago with \$5,000, having discovered there wasn't much on the World Wide Web about the two-toed flightless bird when he did a search for his father, an ostrich farmer in Manchester, England. Last year, he did more than \$3 million in sales of ostrich meat, feathers, decorative eggs and informational tapes.

"If you took all the rest of my money away and just left me enough to pay my bills, I'd still do this," Mr. Warrington said. "I have a passion for it."

