



## **16 Peaks Cattle Company: Regenerative Roots, Akaushi Wagyu, and a Partnership Built to Last**

*Written by: Diana Van Leuven*

Nestled in the foothills of the beautiful smoky mountains of East Tennessee, where pasture meets purpose, 16 Peaks Cattle Company is redefining what it means to raise beef the right way. Led by Andrew Pryor, the operation is more than a cattle farm—it's a thoughtful system built around regenerative agriculture, premium Akaushi Wagyu genetics, and a direct connection from pasture to plate.

At its core, 16 Peaks is about stewardship—of land, livestock, and relationships. Building a Better System from the Ground Up

When Pryor set out to grow 16 Peaks Cattle Company, the vision wasn't just expansion—it was intentional growth. That meant creating a system where cattle could thrive, land could regenerate, and the end product could meet the highest culinary standards. A major step in that journey was the development of a livestock work barn designed for cattle finishing and bunk-fed pasture integration—a facility that allows the farm to balance efficiency with animal well-being.

To bring that vision to life, Pryor partnered with AgCentral Farmers Cooperative. "Having one team that understands the entire operation—from concept to execution—made all the difference," Pryor shared. "We needed more than a builder. We needed a partner."

AgCentral worked alongside 16 Peaks to design and execute a turnkey solution that supports the farm's finishing program while maintaining flexibility for pasture-based management. The result is a system that allows cattle to transition seamlessly between grazing and bunk feeding, optimizing both performance and animal comfort. Regenerative Farming in Action

At 16 Peaks, regenerative agriculture isn't a buzzword—it's a daily practice.

The farm focuses on:

- Soil health through rotational grazing
- Pasture recovery and biodiversity
- Minimizing external inputs
- Maximizing natural forage utilization

By carefully managing grazing patterns and integrating finishing strategies, Pryor is building healthier soils while producing nutrient-dense beef.

“Everything starts with the land,” he explained. “If you take care of the soil, the grass improves. If the grass improves, the cattle perform better. It all works together.”

This systems-based approach is what sets 16 Peaks apart. It's not about pushing production at the expense of the land—it's about creating a cycle where each piece strengthens the next.

### **Elevating Beef with Akaushi Wagyu Genetics**

A key component of the 16 Peaks program is its focus on Akaushi Wagyu beef, known for its exceptional marbling, tenderness, and flavor.

But producing high-quality Akaushi Wagyu isn't just about genetics—it's about management.

The finishing barn, developed in partnership with AgCentral, plays a critical role in this phase. It allows for:

- Controlled feeding environments
- Consistent weight gain and finish
- Reduced stress on cattle
- Enhanced meat quality

This attention to detail ensures that every animal reaches its full potential—resulting in a premium product that meets the expectations of top chefs and discerning consumers alike.

### **From Farm to Table: A Direct Connection**

What happens at 16 Peaks doesn't stop at the farm gate.

The beef raised on these pastures finds its way to some of the region's most respected destinations, including Dancing Bear Appalachian Bistro, Blackberry Farm, Windy Hill Preserve and Harvest, where chefs value both quality and story. These partnerships reflect a shared commitment to excellence—where sourcing matters, and the connection between farmer and plate is honored.

Locally, customers can also find 16 Peaks beef at Butler & Bailey Market and at Bluestem Hollow, bringing farm-raised, thoughtfully produced beef directly to the community.

For Pryor, that accessibility is just as important as the high-end culinary relationships.

“We’re always looking at how to do things better,” Pryor said. “Better for the cattle, better for the land, and better for the people we’re feeding.”

In a region rich with agricultural heritage, 16 Peaks Cattle Company stands out not just for what it produces, but for how it produces it. It’s a story of vision, partnership, and a commitment to doing things the right way—one pasture, one animal, and one relationship at a time.



Photo Credit: Andrew Pryor

