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Pure Pork Heaven

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ACADIANA WEATHER



Sunny

81°F

Wed



92°F 74°F

Thu



90°F 72°F

Fri



93°F 72°F

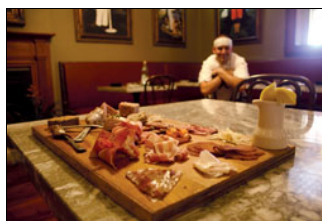
Sat



92°F 73°F

Sicilian charcuterie takes its place at the Cajun table.

Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2010
Written by Mary Tutwiler



Photos by Isabelle Tutwiler

Biting down on Manny Augello's pork terrine with caper berries is a unique culinary experience. It's chewy, it's unctuous, and then there's the crunch. "That's the pig ear," says Augello. There's a layer of cartilage between two thin layers of meat, and it cooks up crunchy, adding that unexpected mouthfeel to the terrine.

Augello is proud of using every part of the pigs he turns into a dazzling array of charcuterie, literally cooked meat, from the French chair cuit.

Charcuterie is the art of preserving meat, through salting, curing or cooking in fat. At its most basic, it's a way to survive the winter in cold climates, where few farm animals are housed and fed in barns. Fall is a time for slaughtering pigs and putting up hams, salt pork and sausages that will last for months until spring. But basic necessity always engenders creativity, and Augello, who grew up in Sicily watching his grandfather tend the family's salumi – the Italian term for cured meats – with the same care he gave to the casks of farmstead wine, spends his days coaxing joints of pork into their full essential earthy flavor.

"The tradition I grew up in is *cucina povera*, the poor kitchen," says Augello. "You use what is available seasonally, and you use everything. It's a way of [cooking] responsibly, so that there is no waste, as well as a way to get through the lean season."

Here in Acadiana, we are used to the concept: A boucherie uses every part of a pig but its squeal. But the methods of preservation and the flavors are very different. Cajun meats are heavily seasoned and smoked to preserve them. Augello's Sicilian heritage involves days of salting and months of curing by hanging joints and sausages to slowly dry the meat. The result – the magnificent prociuttos, copas and bresaolas we had henceforth only found in high end grocery stores.

In addition to the salty cured pork, Augello makes creamy liver mousses, rillettes, and a really wonderful Moorish cured tuna called moiama.

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Augello comes from an auspicious cooking family. His father was a chef for 40 years, working in New Orleans at the beloved Metairie institution Andrea’s and the now-closed Augie’s, before moving to New York. Augello’s parents returned to Sicily to raise their family. While in Sicily, his mother’s father inspired his love of salumi. Augello’s father ran a restaurant there, and little Manny grew up stuffing chickens for the rotisserie. The family returned to the U.S. in 1995, when Augello was 9 years old. He’s been fooling around in the kitchen ever since.



In 2008, Augello had just finished up a degree at Northwestern in Natchitoches, and was moving to Lafayette with his fiancée. Steve Santillo caught wind of the young chef with the Italian background, and hired him prior to opening Jolie’s Louisiana Bistro. Augello’s charcuterie expertise was really lagniappe in the beginning, but with every passing day, as more and more cured meat treasures reach perfection in Augello’s curing box, Santillo began to take note, and salumi is quickly becoming one of the calling cards at Jolie’s.

To complement his rich meat delicacies, Augello’s been experimenting with pickling local fruit and vegetables in season. Think prociutto with figs preserved in wine and cinnamon. Pork paté with pickled five peppers and star anise. Or my utter favorite, sweet and sour braised shallots.



On any given night at Jolie’s an array of charcuterie turns up in two ways: as its unadorned perfect self on the charcuterie plate, or treated with a twist by head chef Paul Mudge for the bar snacks menu. Last week Augello’s chicken liver paté and ham terrine provided an Italian stand-in for the cured pork traditionally used on Bahn Mi, a Vietnamese poboy.

Handmade cheeses from Wanda Barra’s goat farm, La Belle Ecorse in St. Martinville, are great companions to the meat and pickled vegetables. Augello makes a point of shopping locally. “We’re working with farmers who raise grass-fed animals. The

key to charcuterie is good honest-raised meat. It contributes to the flavor, the shelf life and the individual character of the product. When you think about it, charcuterie is really just meat and salt. So the animal has to be well raised to become great charcuterie.”

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...
written by Stanley , August 09, 2010
better than cochon.

...
written by Samuel , August 08, 2010
This guy has a foodie cult following unlike any other chef in town. He has definitely set the bar. This won't be the last we hear about him. Thank you for sharing your talents Manny.

...
written by joe blow , August 07, 2010
i had that stuff. it was terrible. not for me. manny sucks.

...
written by Jolie's Regular , August 05, 2010
I had the Bahn Mi last time I was at Jolies. I am fairly certain the bar snacks are put together by Manny and the rest of the kitchen. The Bahn Mi in particular (with the exception of the ham terrine) was Jeremie Vasseur. Great job guys!!

...
written by local foodie , August 04, 2010
mouth watering. I'm completely addicted to charcuterie. this is the best I've had anywhere in town.

...
written by me , August 04, 2010
This is a joke.

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