

Butchers Share Techniques of the Trade

By Olivia M. Hall

The carcass greets us from the stainless steel table at the front of the room. We—that's an eclectic group of 10 amateur and professional food-lovers who have gathered at the Piggery on a recent Monday evening. For the next three hours, owners Brad Marshall and Heather Sanford will teach us all about how the half-pig before us is turned into pork chops and sausages the old-fashioned way.

For the second year in a row, the husband and wife farming team is offering three evenings of butcher demonstrations during the slightly slower winter months. The classes are part of a larger effort to educate the public on local foods.

"We want to make a connection for people to where their food comes from," Heather explains before class. As often as she can, she takes time out of her packed days to give lectures about any aspect of the Piggery's integrated farming, butcher shop and eatery business at conferences and institutions such as Cornell and Ithaca College. "If I won the lottery, I'd still do this day in and day out. I'm that passionate about giving people access to good food," she says. Quoting a farmer friend, she states, "Farming is my activism."

That evening, we begin our education by sampling the end product, piling a variety of deli meats, sausage and local bread and cheese onto our plates. As we sip regional beer and soda and munch on decadent bacon popcorn, Brad scrapes bone dust off the carcass and explains his philosophy of good meat.

"The genetics of the pig are crucial," he says. The animal on the table is part mulefoot, an old Spanish variety, one of the few truly unimproved types that has a shorter frame than modern breeds and is easy to fatten, perhaps even too much fat for contemporary tastes. "Modern pigs have been stretched and made to be very lean. They kind of look like body-builders," Brad says.

Instead of being speed-grown to 250 pounds with corn and protein- and estrogen-laden soy in half a year like their industrial counterparts, Piggery pigs reach their end weight of 220 pounds with a traditional diet that includes barley and whey. Eight to 12 months with lots of running about and playing, Brad says, let the fine muscle fibers grow slowly like rings on a tree to give them a special chewiness and mouth feel.

Soon we gather around the carcass to get a better look as Brad pulls out the tightly-nestled kidney, removes the prized leaf lard—great for pies because of its high melting point—and cuts out the tenderloin and diaphragm. Next to him, Heather is wielding a sharp knife to trim valuable scraps of meat off the cuts Brad hands to her. "We try to use every last little bit of the pig," she explains. "It takes so much energy to raise these pigs, and meat margins are very low." The scraps go into sausages—the Piggery's specialty—and anything that isn't a prime cut, including the pig's head, ends up in the stock pot.

Meanwhile, the audience does not stand by idly. "We invite people up in several places to try their cutting skills," Heather says.



Photo by Olivia Hall

Brad Marshall and Heather Sanford of the Piggery demonstrating pork butchering techniques.

Courageous participants grab knives and a Japanese pull saw (originally intended for tree cutting) to separate out chops. One man finally masters the technique for rolling and tying up porchetta, his favorite Italian pork roast.

When Brad flips the carcass, we see two blue USDA stamps on the pig's skin. Required by law, "They are a huge issue for local farmers," Heather notes. Only six slaughterhouses serve this region, "and they are teeny." The Piggery has regular appointments with its Mennonite slaughterhouse in Dundee, "but we've already pushed them to their limits. I literally can't get any more slaughter days."

The resulting shortage of local meat poses a problem, as interest and demand in regionally-produced

foods continues to grow. Matt LeRoux, agriculture marketing specialist at Cornell Cooperative Extension, has offered classes on buying local meats with as many as 65 participants. "That butchering demos can sell out is a great barometer for public interest in locally raised meats," he says.

Some of the butcher demonstration's diverse participants will surely only heighten this interest. Sean Agate and his brother Don are reopening the landmark Krebs restaurant in Skaneateles with farm-to-table ingredients. The Piggery, says Sean, "is always on a lot of chefs' Mecca hit list to see something like this happen. It's amazing."

For Phoebe Young, who asked for

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SEEN Event Touts Local Energy Solutions

By Eric Banford

Since 2010, the Sustainable Enterprise and Entrepreneur Network (SEEN) has brought together businesses, organizations and individuals to work on sustaining our community and environment, while also succeeding professionally. Monthly gatherings have focused on networking, local resiliency, building online community for a business, and presentations from business leaders. The January gathering highlighted three local businesses focused on sustainable energy solutions.

Nick Goldsmith, Ithaca's Sustainability Planner, appreciates that the three presenters are good examples of the three areas the Town of Ithaca's Community Energy Action Plan is focused on: transportation, energy use in buildings and renewable energy sources. Goldsmith gave an overview of Ithaca's focus areas for emissions reductions, tying in how each presenter was a part of the solution.

"Crista Shopis' new ultra-efficient air conditioner can help reduce energy use in buildings. It's a great example of how new technology can be a tool to reduce energy usage, and part of our action plan is promoting new technology," Goldsmith says. "Paul Mutolo's hydrogen fuel cell vehicles could tie in with our transportation plan; I'd love to see the town explore using one of their vehicles. And Herb

Dwyer's talk on District Energy and Combined Heat and Power (CHP), could work in the long term because the [town's] Comprehensive Plan is targeting certain areas for more density, which this technology needs."

CHP is an extremely efficient way of producing electricity and using waste heat, basically double the efficiency of generation, Goldsmith explains. "It's not new technology, but it's regaining popularity. And promoting CHP is part of the list of possible actions in our energy action plan," he says.

Herb Dwyer is president and CEO of ASI Energy & ASI Renovations, and he gave an overview of a CHP project planned for Center Ithaca on the Commons. "Center Ithaca will be the anchor project of The Commons design," he says.

The CHP plant will initially be powered by natural gas, with the hope of transitioning to renewable resources over time. "You have to minimize risk in any project," says Dwyer. "We looked into using biogas, but there are too many questions still out there. We've reached out to the Danby Land Bank to help us answer those questions. Biomass is an industry in its infancy, and eventually it's going to mature, and when that happens we'll have infrastructure to deploy a renewable resource."

Dwyer notes that the European CHP model is based on upon a dif-

ferent culture and different regulations. "It's like Cornell's model, where you have one huge heating plant and a smart web of distribution. Our model is adapted more for American culture and regulation," he says. "We are using a scalability approach that allows us to get district energy install, to get capital flowing and allows us to think big but start small. We've done a lot of testing, we believe it works, and we're installing it now. We have to act now, we don't have time to wait until 2050. Little wins are all we need now. Little wins add up."

Crista Shopis is president and co-founder of Synairco, an Ithaca-based company that is commercializing a patented environmentally responsible air-conditioner. "Ten percent of all U.S. energy is used to air condition," she says. "Our technology uses less than one-third the amount of energy than a typical air conditioner, so that could take a huge load off the grid."

Another advantage of Synairdo's technology is that it has a lower demand, she notes. "The grid has to be prepared if everyone turns everything on all at once. So it has to be up and running and burning coal just in case this demand is needed. Our air conditioner has about a quarter of the typical AC demand, so we could take a huge demand off the grid by switching technologies," says Shopis.

The advanced air conditioner also

lacks chemicals typically used in the cooling process. Though current AC is cleaner than it once was, it still has huge global-warming impacts, she says. Not so with Synairco's new technology, which uses no chemicals.

"We play with the properties of air so that we can cool and dehumidify off a 60 degree coil, compared to 45 degrees for current AC," Shopis explains. "We can get 60 degrees right from a geothermal loop. Homeowners are not our current market, due to high initial cost. Our target is industrial and manufacturing buildings, plus large commercial buildings going for LEED certification."

A current AC unit might last 15 years and then be discarded, says Shopis. Her product will cost more up front, but will pay back in about 14 years, and since it only has two moving parts that can easily be replaced. It could last 30 to 50 years with only a small motor replaced. "If you're going to own a building for a long time, this product makes a lot of sense."

Shopis appreciates the work being done by SEEN. "I think it's great to get local entrepreneurs together. There is definitely a need to support each other. So it's great to have a regular place to network," she says.

For more information about SEEN, and for future event listings, visit <http://theseen.org>.

Foods

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new skill."

Healthy Dinners is a pet project that Begert has been working on for the past year, with the help of Cornell student Alexandria Schmall. They received start-up grants from the Robert Smith Award (CU) and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, as well as support from the Park Foundation. Southside Community Center has been a good host, including Charles Rhody, cook and BJM staff member.

Meals are packaged once each month and made with fresh ingredients (organic if available) and can be made vegetarian. This month's selections include shepherd's pie (vegetarian, with lentils or with beef), spinach feta lasagna rolls, vegetable or chicken fajitas, stuffed portabella mushrooms with rice and seasonal veggies and/or farm raised lemon pepper tilapia

and harvest rice and vegetables. There's also a butternut squash and apple soup available, with no preparation time required; just heat and eat.

Meals can be paid for with cash, check or EBT (food stamps) card, and prices range from \$8.50 for the soup to \$15 for the fish, the most expensive of these meals.

All profits go to the fruit and vegetable snack program, which costs about \$24,000 per year at Beverly J. Martin School, and to Ithaca Community Harvest, which supports access to local foods. The program uses about a bushel of fruit and a bushel of vegetables each day and keeps costs down by gleaning and accepting donations from local farms as much as possible. It teaches about 400 children, teachers and staff each school day that fruits and vegetables are tasty as well as good for you. Begert says that the beet chips, thin slices of beet, are very popular. She hopes to add cooking and gardening classes and other food related events to these sessions

in the near future.

To order or to volunteer, go to the Facebook page www.facebook.com/HealthySnacks and scroll down to the order form, and/or e-mail Begert at ffv.bjm@gmail.com or call her at 227-2850 to order one of these tasty meals and confirm an assembly time. Already-assembled meals cost an additional \$2 each

Butchers

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this class as a Christmas present from her parents, owning her own farm is still a dream. But she is learning as much as she can about local food and farming.

At the end of the evening, after the pig carcass on the table has been divvied up into ham, chops and other recognizable cuts, we leave sated with fresh knowledge and pastured pork.

The Piggery will hold two additional demonstrations this winter, on Feb. 11 and March 11. For more

information and to register, visit www.thepiggery.net.

Kava

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you're in need of getting healthier or getting well, sometimes you need some help getting there. Cost shouldn't be a barrier. We can work with those who could really benefit by what we have to offer."

Mystic Water Kava Bar, a Race for the Space contest finalist, will also feature local artwork and live entertainment at a volume where patrons can conduct a conversation. Sitar players are welcome. "I've lived in Ithaca for seven or eight years now and I know the people, I know the vibe, and I think this business will fit right into the community," Galgocz says.


For more information, check out their Facebook page, Mystic Water Kava Bar & Yoga Studio-Ithaca, NY or call (954) 534-0782.



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