



Charleston chef finds his pig passion in Pamplico

By Libby Wiersma
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A Charleston chef is putting Pee Dee livestock on the gourmet map. During the Charleston Wine + Food Festival last weekend, Chef Craig Deidt of Cypress shared with us his excitement about one of his newest passions: creating dishes from guinea hogs he sources from Florence County farmer, Gra Moore.

Deidt's interest in these hogs — diminutive by pig standards, weighing in at about 65 to 80 pounds — was piqued when he was approached by representatives of Slow Food Charleston, a group working to reconnect consumers with the people, products and traditions associated with naturally produced foods. They are working with Moore and others to create awareness about the goodness of guinea hogs, a cross-breed Lowcountry breed.

Brooders such as Gra Moore are working hard to see that guinea hogs flourish once again. Raised on a diet of heirloom corn, greens, hay and vegetables, Moore's hogs have a flavor that distinguishes them from your run-of-the-mill pig.

"It's the best pork I've ever eaten," said Deidt, who recently enthralled guests of a Slow Food dinner in



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY RICK MOORE

Shown in Trio of Guinea Hogs featuring braised shoulder with saavy cabbage, honey crisp apples, rye-roasted belly with white grits, celery root and smoked house jam, and grilled loin with carrots, orange and corn.

Charleston with pork liver terrine, trio of black guinea hog and other dishes designed to show off his new find. He wastes nothing, using every part of the animal, and is incorporating guinea hog into his popular seasonal chowders' offerings as well.

When Moore established his Carolina Heritage Farm five years ago, marketing his livestock was not part of the plan.

"I always liked livestock," he said. "I found five cows, which is really too small, to even be considered a farm, but I still wanted some livestock to raise.



Picture are, from left, Carlo Patrici, founder of Slow Food International, Gra Moore, Chef Craig Deidt of the Slow Food dinner on Feb. 21 in Charleston.

Guinea hogs were a good breed to raise on small acreage and they have a minimal impact on the environment.

Guinea hogs are classified as a critical breed on the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy's Conservation Priority List, another reason Moore took to heart. The Slow Food folks approached him about working with them to raise awareness about the breed. Then they approached Deidt, who recognized a superior product and already desired to share it with others. That's how the farmer and the

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chef became a team of sorts.

"I was working with Craig and am interested in working with other chefs who have the same goals," Moore said. "I am really impressed with what he does with the hogs — the dishes he makes with them are a whole lot different from what I cook at home."

Also known as Old World herd pigs, guinea hogs are compact, but possess a characteristic thick fat layer.

"The fat is where it's at," Deidt said. "That's where all the flavor is. If you don't embrace fat, guinea hog is not the meat for you. But if you do embrace it, it's going to give you a unique sense of enjoyment."

Moore says he limits his retail operation to chefs only at this point. For more information, call him at (843) 687-6416.

Learn more about Chef Deidt and read his blog at thetalkofthetown.com.

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