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## Food

CHARCUTERIE



House-made sausages hang in the cooler at Cypress restaurant.



NATHALIE DUPREE

When Craig Deihl, chef of Cypress, started showing me the beauty shots of his favorite heritage pig on his phone camera, I was hooked. I kept looking and listening. He stared at the picture of a cured ham and talked about how much salt, how much hickory, how much smoked eucalyptus was used to make such a beautiful ham.

Part of the allure of cutting up a whole animal is making charcuterie — in local parlance, sausages. (Charcuterie is the French word for the Italian salumeria.) This includes pates (think a refined meatloaf) and other foods made from the scraps of meat. In Europe, the sausage maker is revered for his art.

For years we were unable to get any but the most mundane sausages here in the United States. European sausages were prohibited, as were Prosciutto di Parma and other fine specialized meats. Although some of those products are now allowed in this country, chefs are making their own, both fresh and cured.

The other part of cutting up one's own meat is knowing where it came from, even what

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# Hog heaven

### Restaurants learn art of butchering to make sausages, other specialties



A charcuterie plate prepared at Cypress.

it ate and who its father was. Ordering "blind" from the butcher or grocery store may produce, say two ribs of lamb or pork that are different sizes, unable to be used as a crown roast. One may be tougher or more flavorful than the other. At least this way, both sides are comparable.

Charcuterie is now "hot" in Charleston. There are a dozen chefs who come in early

just to cut up a whole hog and cure hams, make pates, rillettes, pancetta, salami and soppressata. The hams range from



Deihl

sugar and salt cured or wrapped with kidney fat and rice to keep them soft, like Parma hams. These chefs work with government guidelines by their sides — checking temperatures of refrigerators, working in immaculate conditions, reading and studying what generations of Germans, Italians and other Europeans have done with all the parts of the hog.

The first pates I fell in love with in Charleston were those by Frank Lee at Slightly North of Broad. In fact, for eight years my regular routine has been to order either the fried chicken livers or the charcuterie plate for lunch. Much of their charcuterie is now made at SNOB's sister restaurant, High Cotton. I love the hot toast that comes with a cold pate, the spread of a duck or pork rilette as it slides on the toast.

It's not just the hog, it's lamb and beef, too. Just about anything that walks or quacks is being ground up, hung and treated tenderly to be ready for customers to be able to dine on the best.

To see what was being done at Cypress, I met Craig when he was cutting up one of his pigs, a 267-pounder, that he got from Keegan-Filion Farm in Walterboro. The dressed weight includes the heart, liver and kidneys. (The chitlins are left elsewhere.) These hogs are raised and processed in the certified humane manner.

All the Cypress chefs were there — they didn't have to be — just to participate and learn. The upstairs prep kitchen gleamed. The pig was brought out and placed on the steel counter while Craig, in two minutes flat, cut off the rear legs (hams) and shoulders.

After that was done, he turned on a very scary looking slicer, where he cut up the remaining parts of the pig. We were all excited by the possibilities of the meats that were cut, rubbed, ground, hung, refrigerated. For us, it was an exciting day seeing the process from beginning to end. We were in hog heaven, in a way.

After the pig was securely back in the cooler, we sampled some of the meats on his appetizer menu that day: fennel and orange salami, a Tuscan salami, pancetta, cabernet salami and salumetta (25 percent beef, 75 percent pork). The staff brought out a plate of gribiche with fennel, apple and mustard; pork liver pate in hickory smoked bacon; and head cheese with smoked paprika and fennel seed or mustard and parsley. His home-made mustard and lard biscuits framed the plate. It was a feast for a king.

One of my favorite books is "The Passionate Epicure," about a man who eats like a king. The book's fictional hero, Dodin-Bouffant, is regarded as an epicure of the strictest standards.

At one point in the book, Dodin-Bouffant accepts an invitation from a prince to one of those dinners we all dread: a pretentious, unending night of rich and fatuous courses. Gold-darzed desserts culminated the evening. He hated it all.

Subsequently, he invited the prince to his home. What did he have his humble (I hasten to add female) chef cook? Sausages: deliciously flavored and cured sausages of every type. The prince was properly chastened and forewent overly gussied-up food.

So how many pigs and sides of beef does Cypress cut up? The market drives it, of course, but Craig is averaging two to three pigs a month, and four to five sides of beef. Every scrap is used, whether for a saddle of beef or pork loin. And each piece turns into something worthy of the Dulin.

Nathalie Dupree, who lives in Charleston, is the former director of Fitch's Cooking School in Atlanta and the author of eight cookbooks, including "Nathalie Dupree's Comfortable Entertaining." She may be reached at [www.nathalie.com](http://www.nathalie.com).

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