



Olympic Showdown: Italian Prosciutto? Spanish Jamon? or.... American La Quercia!

If you haven't perused our charcuterie case before, you could be forgiven for thinking that Spain and Italy produce the finest hams in the world. Certainly they deserve their reputations based on the quality of their jamons and prosciuttos, but Herb and Kathy Eckland of La Quercia ("the oak" in Italian) are making a strong case for Iowa. The cured meats and prosciuttos coming out of their *prosciuttificio* easily give those big European names a run for their money. Herb and Kathy both have long ties to food and agriculture: Kathy is a former ranch hand and Agriculture Economics researcher at U.C. Berkley, and Herb has over thirty years of experience in agriculture from raising crops to working cattle. After living in Parma, Italy for three and a half years (where they learned the art and the joy of making prosciutto) the couple spent five years researching and experimenting at home. The techniques and recipes they developed result in prosciuttos (and other cuts of meat) of the same quality you would find in Italy, but reflecting their American heritage.

La Quercia not only produces artisanal cured meats of incredible quality, but they do so in a responsible, sustainable, humane way- something we can really get behind! By focusing on specific varieties- specific breeds of pig- they highlight what sets these breeds apart from the pork you'll find at the grocery store. And since the Berkshire and Tamworth heritage breeds they use are considered "threatened" breeds, the sustainability and treatment of the hogs are key concerns for the Ecklands. All of the farmers who raise hogs for La Quercia subscribe to humane practices: the pigs have access to enough open space to move around, root in the mud, and otherwise act the way happy pigs act; no artificial hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics are used; the pigs are never fed animal byproducts; and none of the pigs come from large confinement facilities. For all their trouble, La Quercia compensates the farmers based on the price the farmer decides is required to make a small profit- that is, the price is independent of commodity pricing, and helps to keep production and a sustainable level.

New La Quercia Goodies

The loving care of the farmers raising the pigs, and the passion and commitment of La Quercia all come together to create prosciuttos and other cuts of meat that are some of the best tasting, highest quality charcuterie you'll find anywhere in the world, and all you have to do is come to our little shop to try them! Firstly, we have the Tamworth varietal, known for their dense and muscular ham structures, giving the **Tamworth Prosciutto** a robust, meaty flavor which would be perfect for sandwiches, pizza, or wrapping just about anything. But this quality also allows Tamworths to have large body mass with relatively little fat, making them perfect for BACON. (I'll give you a minute to drool over the thought)..... The **Tamworth Country Cured Bacon** (winner of a Good Food Award this year) is dry cured, giving the quality of the fat and meat to shine through, instead of being overwhelmed by smoke or brown sugar as with other bacons. Your cheesemonger can slice it however thick you want: slice it thin and eat it straight out of the case alongside cheese, fruit, and beer/wine; or slice it thick for frying (at low heat!) or lardons.



The Berkshire varietal is like the porcine opposite of the Tamworth. Whereas Tamworths are prized for their lean quality, the Berkshires are prized for their marbling and juiciness. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the special **Acorn Edition Berkshire Prosciutto**. The hogs are fed a diet of at least 60% acorns, which are incredibly high in tannins as well as fat and protein, giving the meat a subtlety and nutty complexity, and a sinfully silky, melt-in-your-mouth texture. Get a few thin slices of this

and a bottle of Prosecco or Argus cider and enjoy the decadence.

Because of the way La Quercia trims their prosciuttos, there is a little bit of fat leftover when the legs are ready to age. But this luscious stuff is just too good to toss out! Instead, it is cured, ground, and spiced to create **Iowa White Spread**. Essentially whipped Lardo, this spread can be your new secret ingredient: put it in pasta sauce, season a roast chicken with it (just underneath the skin), use it in place of butter in just about anything, or enjoy it simply by spreading it on a warm slice of bread.

Prosciutto isn't the only thing La Quercia does well! Alongside the Acorn Edition and Tamworth varietals is the **Coppa Americana**. This dry cured pork shoulder is seasoned with cocoa and Pimenton de la Vera, giving the meat a deep richness and nutty, earthy flavor that pairs perfectly with red wine, or big and slightly sweet beers.

Speaking of beer, we suggest pairing all these new La Quercia products with a delicious new addition to our beer wall! **Hog Heaven**, is an intensely dry-hopped Barleywine style coming to us from Avery Brewing Company out of Boulder, Colorado. Barleywines tend to have a medium to full body and often run higher in alcohol. While some Barleywines can develop an almost chewy mouthfeel, Hog Heaven's upfront hop presence mellows out the caramel maltiness, making it incredibly drinkable on the hot summer days to come. Pair it with any La Quercia product and you will literally be in Hog Heaven!



We love what La Quercia is doing, and not just the way it tastes! Everyone involved, from the farmers who raise these pigs to everyone who works with Herb and Kathy and at La Quercia, make this the kind of company that we are proud to work with. And this is just the beginning! We'll be rotating things in and out, so make sure you come in quickly and get a taste of all of these amazing things!

Cheese-y Events & News

Sunday, August 12 (12-4pm) - Slow Food Austin is hosting it's second annual Quiz Bowl at The Highball. This is a great spectator event; while you're watching teams try to out-compete each other in foodie knowledge and trivia, you get to eat good food (like our cheese!) and drink good drinks! Plus, there are door prizes! The \$25 ticket benefits Slow Food Austin. For more information or to purchase tickets, [click here](#).

Cheesily Yours,

Brad
John, Kendall, Kelly, Courtney, Paul, and Victoria



ring us 512 531 9610
visit us Tues-Sat 11-7 | Sun 12-5 | Closed Mon
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