

# The Star-Ledger

## Mangalitsa pork has the flavor of...steak

by Vicki Hyman/The Star-Ledger

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G. Chris Andersen greets some of his bigger pigs. Michael Clampffer, a private chef at Mosefund Farm, is raising rare Mangalitsa pigs at the farm. G. These Hungarian pigs were once on the edge of extinction, but are making a comeback thanks to their delicious beefy taste and high fat. Clampffer. STAR\_LEDGER PHOTO BY ARISTIDE ECONOMOPOULOS

**Pork** may be the other white meat, but to hear foodies tell it, [Mangalitsa pork](#) is simply otherworldly.

This rare pig breed, native to Hungary, is thickly layered with creamy, intensely flavored fat, and its generously marbled meat reportedly tastes like steak.

The jowls are as tender as halibut cheeks; the belly is like buttery, rich toro. Or so the legend goes. It's only recently available in the United States, but thanks to a New Jersey financier and

his private chef, you'll see it popping up on the menus of a handful of high-end restaurants this summer.

Mangalitsa pigs, first bred in 1833 by Archduke Joseph of Hungary, were popular across Europe for most of the 19th century, but the breed started to die out as production shifted to leaner pigs that matured more quickly. The corpulent Mangalitsas just barely survived Communism, but they have been making a small-scale resurgence across the pond; the meat is especially in demand in Spain, where it is made into prized hams.

A Washington entrepreneur imported a herd in 2006, and his company, Woolly Pigs, is the only breeder of Mangalitsas in the Western Hemisphere. According to Woolly Pigs, Mangalitsa fat is higher in monounsaturated fatty acids than typical pork, so it's healthier and doesn't taste heavy or greasy.

Michael Clampffer, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, had been working as a private chef for boutique investment banker G. Chris Andersen, when he heard about Mangalitsas. Clampffer shuttles between Andersen's New York home and Mosefund Farm, a 275-acre spread beneath a ridge in the Kittatinny Mountains in Sussex County.

Andersen is the quintessential gentleman farmer: He likes to tool around his property in a pickup, zig-zagging up the mountain to show off the view, point out riding trails he bulldozed himself, and give tours of the 250-year horse barn he restored. He's also an inveterate foodie. The kitchen in his farmhouse includes a pizza oven and a walk-in refrigeration unit; the enormous outdoor grill can cook a 175-pound pig; and he has his own moss-covered smokehouse out back (which will have to be expanded to accommodate his Mangalitsas).

Their venture into pork production began as a lark. "Let's get some pigs, make some ham and bacon," Andersen told Clampffer not long after he hired him. They started off with standard pink Yorkshire pigs, then switched to Berkshire pigs, a heritage breed known for its rich, authentic pork flavor.

Then the men learned about the Mangalitsa, and decided to give it a shot. "We wanted to do something unique and different," Clampffer says.

"And it tastes good," Andersen adds.

They purchased 80 neutered pigs from Woolly Pigs in the spring, and the first batch are headed to slaughter this week. In a large, shaded pen, the younger pigs enthusiastically root around in several inches of muck, their coarse, curly black hair coated in mud. Most of these are about 80 to 90 pounds, and eat 6 to 8 pounds of feed a day to gain a single pound. The pigs graze on clove and chicory, and before slaughter are fed barley, wheat and rye, which produces a hard, white fat. This is ideal for curing, Clampffer says.

Mosefund Farm is the only outfit east of the Mississippi raising Mangalitsas, and its first customers include Princeton's Elements, Restaurant Latour at Crystal Springs Resorts' Grand Cascades Lodge in Hamburg and Westchester County's award-winning Blue Hill at Stone Barns.

Next week, Restaurant Latour will take delivery of half of one of Mosefund Farm's pigs -- literally half a pig, split down the center from snout to tail, along with a gallon of blood.

Executive chef Michael Weisshaupt plans to age the pig in one of his refrigeration units for 10 days to two weeks to tenderize it. He'll cure the belly in salt, pepper, cinnamon and star anise for a couple of days, then slow-roast it. He'll render the port fat and add onion for traditional German schmaltz and spread it on freshly-baked bread, and for a private dinner in conjunction with a beer festival, he'll make pulled pork sliders. Some of the leg meat will be marinated and confited, salted and slow-cooked in its own fat.

"Some of the other pieces ...," he says, trailing off, "I'm going to be surprising myself most likely."

Mangalitsa will begin appearing on the menu in late July, and he expects the pig to last about a month -- the pork belly itself will probably feed 40 to 50 people, he says. He already has another pig on order for September.

At Princeton's Elements, executive chef Scott Anderson and executive sous chef Joe Sparatta have a multi-course Mangalitsa dinner planned for Aug. 10, possibly with beer pairings. ("These are serious beers," Sparatta says.)

The restaurant has an in-house butcher who is accustomed to working with whole animals, although a 300-pound pig will be a first.

This first pig will be devoted to charcuterie: liver pate, heart pastrami, kidney terrine, blood sausage and, Sparatta says, "lardo, first and foremost."

Lardo is cured fatback, a gastronome's Holy Grail but a cardiologist's nightmare. "The fat content is just astounding," Sparatta says. "I can't even imagine how much lardo."

At Elements, they've been talking up the pig so much that the reservation book is already filling up. And word of the prized pigs has spread. Mosefund Farm has fielded calls from people who want to buy a Mangalitsa as a pet and from foodies who just want a taste of the next big thing. "You can get a ham," farm manager Brent Schicker tells them. "You can't get a piece of ham."

Mosefund Farm is retailing Mangalitsa cuts to home chefs for \$16 a pound (go to [mosefund.com](http://mosefund.com) for contact information). Mosefund will also be hosting "Pigstock 2010" in January, a , three-day, hands-on class open to all on butchering, curing and cooking the pigs.

Eventually, Andersen and Clampffer would like to see the pork available in grocery stores. Andersen doesn't expect this venture to be a money-making operation, but hopes it won't be a money-consuming one. But either way, he'll be happily consuming Mangalitsa.

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