

Fine Swines:

CHEF + CHOICE



When A Pig Becomes Pork



猪圆玉润



1 3,000–12,700 BC is the time frame suggested by archeological evidence as to when pigs were first domesticated. As Harold McGee says in his book *On Food & Cooking*, “Livestock not only transformed inedible grass and scraps into nutritious meat, but constituted as a walking larder, a core of concentrated nourishment that could be harvest whenever it was needed.” Accounting for 38 percent of the worldwide meat production, pork is the most widely eaten meat today. From the Americas, Asia, Europe, Oceania, almost

every country except certain Muslim countries has its own special pork dish. So what makes a pig different from other meats? Are there differences between hogs and boars? How do the different pigs taste and what’s the appropriate method of preparation? We got Executive Chef Alex Phan of Park Hotel Clarke Quay; Head Chef Antonio Coccozza of Grissini in Grand Copthorne Waterfront; culinary director of the Lo & Behold Group Chef Daniel Sia and Chef De Cuisine Jack Allibone of Bayswater Kitchen to taste six types of pork and cook three pork dishes each. **DD**

The pedigree of a pig: Innate traits & meat quality

The pork dishes that usually adorn our dining tables are from the domesticated pig scientifically identified as *Sus scrofa domesticus*. They come from the Suidae family, comprising of eight genera and 16 species. Essentially the same, pigs, hogs and boars have certain distinctive features. Uncastrated male domestic pigs and wild pigs of any genders are known as boars. Hogs mean any domestic pigs that weigh more than 54 kilogrammes. The wild ones usually inhabit wetlands, savannas, forests and grasslands. Omnivorous in nature, pigs are one of the easiest livestock to care for: they bear large litters; grow quickly; eat whatever they’re fed and are great foragers depending on their breed. Wild pigs feed on fruits, roots, rodents and certain small reptiles. Farmed pigs are commonly fed ‘slop’; an indiscriminate mixture of leftovers, rinds and edible scraps. Chester Whites are known for their hardiness and well-marbled meat. Guinea Hogs are hardy as well and are exceptional foragers, suited for pasture-pork producers. Iberian and Basque ham pigs are leaner but grow at a slower rate. Hampshire pigs have amazing feed-to-meat conversion rate and sport lean, mild tasting flesh with little back fat. Nowadays, the majority of the pig markets are dominated by fast-growing European hybrid descendants. Pigs that are bred solely for their meat are still tender with relatively soluble connective tissue at about six months of age when they reach sexual maturity and are normally slaughtered then.

The rearing of a pig: Of economics & humaneness

In 2017, half the world's pork supply was consumed by China and the numbers are unceasing. The appeal for meat is parallel to the growth of the middle-class population globally, encouraging unprincipled farmers to exploit the opportunity to meet the demands; meat has to be produced at minimum cost in the shortest amount of time. Mass production, however undesirable it has become, has made meat a more affordable commodity. Back in 1978, a streak of legislative acts in Switzerland mandated that breeders provide their sounders of swine ample living space, outdoor roaming space and sunlight amongst others. Many other countries followed suit, but the welfare of the pigs are still not taken care of. Raised in cramped spaces, Cris de Coeur over the years have brought about changes in the way livestock are raised, yet in certain farms, expediencies are still in favour.

Iberian pork secreto with chimichurri by Chef Daniel Sia



The anatomy of a pig: One man's meat is another's poison

The pig is essentially one of those animals that constitute nose-to-tail dining; almost everything can be eaten or made into something. Most diners are familiar with loin cuts that are used to make bacon for breakfast, the legs that become ham centrepieces on a Christmas table, spare ribs for gnawing on with glasses of cold beer and the meats as well as the intestines that goes into sausage-making. Slightly over a quarter of a pig comprises of hair, offal, blood and bones; the latter three deemed inedible by most and are commonly discarded. However, in Europe and Greater China for example, blood is included in sausages, sauces and puddings. Offal are commonplace on a Chinese table, where they would be braised, boiled and occasionally sautéed. Bones are lynchpins to a good stock and are the base for Japanese ramen soups. Central Europe has on average 15 definitive cuts of pork while the French boast 21 cuts, the Italians 12 and the Vietnamese fourteen. Each of these cuts are made into dishes to savour and sate.



Jasper-grilled US Kurobuta pork collar,
roasted vegetable & red wine sauce by Chef Antonio Cocozza

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pork jowl, pomme mousseline, honey mustard & red wine sauce



Chef Alex Phan's Choice

Park Hotel Clarke Quay

Huber's Butchery's pork jowl & Canadian pork loin back ribs

Singaporean Chef Alex Phan shares, "My favourite pork dish is the Chinese black vinegar braised pig trotter. I always loved that the dish had a good balance of meat and fat, with the acidity of the vinegar to cut through the richness. I can't possibly forget the aroma with its special blend of spices and herbs." The pork for his dishes are supplied by Huber's Butchery. He made a pork jowl dish and served it with a pomme mousseline, honey mustard and red wine sauce. The Canadian pork ribs were done in a barbeque style with an herb slaw and spicy mayo. "For me, my favourite part of the pork would be the infamous pork belly. I'm able to grill, pan-fry, braise and etcetera; there are so many ways I could cook this cut by applying the different styles of techniques or cooking." He chose to sous vide and roast his pork belly, serving it with compressed apple, walnuts and pumpkin.

Italian Chef Antonio Coccozza lived in a time where families reared their own pigs and slaughtered them. "It was uncommon to buy pigs unless you knew the family who raised them. My grandmother used to rear her own pigs. When we slaughtered them, a huge feast would follow. We made sure to salvage whatever we could; the fur was made into brushes, the blood into a dessert called sanguinaccio dolce and so on. Our extended family and friends would come to help with the processing." Chef Coccozza cooks ziti pasta with Italian pork sausages; Josper-grills a United States kurobuta pork collar, and honouring his country's heritage, a dish of Parma ham with mozzarella. "Farmed pigs are very different from family-raised pigs. The meat tastes better; whatever the family ate, the pigs could eat too. Before slaughtering, a vet would come and make sure the pig is healthy. It's bittersweet to kill the pigs we raise, but it's also a time for family celebrations and get-togethers."



Chef Antonio Coccozza's Choice

Grand Copthorne Waterfront

Huber's Butchery's Batallé pork belly & Canadian pork loin back ribs





roasted Iberian pork chop



Over at Keppel Bay, Bayswater Kitchen's main focus is seafood; however, Chef Jack Allibone's menu includes pork dishes for all. "Fatty and rich, pork meat has got sweet undertones to it and we want the vegetables we serve with it to highlight that while cutting through the richness." He sous vides the Batallé pork jowl and lightly grills it. "Jowls are my favourite cuts of pork. I added turnip slices and burnt apple purée to cut through the richness of the pork. I pair this with a beer because it's quite yeasty. The Batallé pork belly is lovely because they've got a nice fat to meat ratio. The dish is quite English as we have peas and potatoes." Both cuts are from Huber's Butchery. From Indoguna, the Bangalow Sweet Pork comes with a fermented cabbage and sliced fennel dressed in lemon juice. "In England, pork is seen as a breakfast meat; bacon, pork sausages in dishes like bangers and mash. We used to roast pork on Sundays, but people have moved on to beef because pork is seen as a cheaper cut. But varieties like Iberico are making a breakthrough in the United Kingdom. A lot of big tapas restaurants are opening up in London and they're championing famous Spanish pork."

Chef Daniel Sia's Choice

The Lo&Behold Group

Huber's Butchery's pork belly

Born and raised in Singapore, Chef Daniel Sia grew up eating (and still does) an easily accessible Chinese dish: kway chap. "This Teochew dish uses pig's offals such as intestines, skin, and many years ago, pig's blood, but this is not allowed anymore. Together with braised eggs and tofu, they are served in a hot herbal-flavoured broth accompanied by a small bowl of white mee hoon kway (very wide, smooth and silky noodles)." A fan of Spanish pork, Chef Sia prepares a roasted Iberian pork chop, an Iberian pork secreto with chimichurri and his signature pork belly pot au feu. "When someone mentions nose to tail dining, the pig comes to mind. There are so many parts that can be eaten and are really delicious for example fried pig's ears, roasted pork knuckle, stir-fried pork liver, smoked bone marrow and pot roasted pig's head which people from all around the world enjoy regardless of which side of the globe they come from. Using the whole hog also means less wastage, and keeps the food business sustainable all year round (and not a seasonal ingredient). So if anyone craves for pork, they can have it whenever they please!"



Chef Jack Allibone's Choice

Bayswater Kitchen

Huber's Butchery's pork jowl, pork belly & Indoguna's Bangalow sweet pork



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Tasting : 6 Types & Cuts

** Please note that the pork cuts were all cooked individually with the temperatures and methods as indicated.*

Indoguna Bangalow Sweet Pork




 Roast: 180°C for 12 minutes

This pig is a crossbreed between three species: Berkshire, Duroc and Landrace. Bred in Australia, a country which prioritises its ecosystem, the pigs are all raised in ecopens. Fed with a specialised grain diet and a strict no-medications or growth hormones method, they won the coveted award 'Australia's best tasting pork' by Vogue Good Produce Awards.

Huber's Butchery Kurobuta Pork Neck Steak




 Roast: 180°C for 6 minutes

Back then, these hogs were fattened with the by-products of surrounding dairy farms, breweries and distilleries. They mature fast and their flavourful meat is adequately marbled. Japanese chefs call them "kurobuta" which literally translates to black pig. Bred in the United States, Kurobuta Berkshire's pork pedigree is verified by the American Berkshire Association (ABA). Raised naturally, with no synthetic growth hormones or antibiotics, the pigs are fed with only grain.


Canadian Pork Loin Back Ribs



 Sous vide: 67°C for 12 hours

Mangalica Pork Loin Steak




 Roast: 180°C for 5 minutes

Hungary's native pig with curly wool, the Mangalica has been bred since the 19th century. Their diet is a complex mixture of green fodder, alfalfa, grass, wheat, sunflowers, barley, maize and occasionally pumpkins and sugar beets. Rich in unsaturated fat, the meat has a high marble content and is sought after by most top chefs in the world. This product is supplied exclusively from the world famous manufacturer of genuine and traditional Hungarian products; PICK.

Batallé Pork Jowl & Pork Belly



 Sous vide: 62°C for 12 hours for pork belly
Sous vide: 57°C for 24 hours for pork jowl

Spanish pork has always been loved by chefs for its flavour and texture. Batallé is a company that was founded in 1920. They handle the entire cycle; from the genetics in breeding the pigs, to feed production, to slaughtering and processing the carcasses for shipping. The pigs are a hybrid of breeds like Duroc, Yorkshire, Landrace, and Pietrain. Reared in Spain and fed with grain, the pork meat is richly marbled.

Canada's mandatory national swine identification, Pig Trace Canada ensures the country's pork farmers adhere to strict food safety regulations. At Primrose Farms Traditional Pork, the pigs are a mixed breed of Landrace, Large White and Duroc. On a large farm located in Alberta, the pigs are fed predominantly with wheat, barley, soy, peas and corn without any hormones or feed additives.