VANCOUVERcourier

Food Crawl: Sausage party

Oyama gets 17-year-old French exchange student stamp of approval

Willow Yamauchi / Vancouver Courier

January 2, 2013 02:00 AM

John vanderLieck oversees the sausage making at Oyama.   Photograph By Jason Lang

Earlier this year, my family hosted a 17-year-old student from France. Wanting to make her feel at home, we bought a large amount of baguettes and cheese, which she roundly dismissed as tasting not right. After some searching, we were able to find baguettes and cheese that were satisfactory to her. However, by the fifth day of her stay she started to get a hankering for sausage. And not just any sausage but saucisson sec, a dry sausage from France that apparently drives addicts into fits of withdrawal after less than a week.

We scoured the city for saucisson sec. Sausage after sausage was rejected as not right, until the day when our student proudly laid a sausage in front of me and proclaimed that there is decent sausage in Vancouver, after all.

The producer of this sausage? Oyama Sausage from Granville Island.

Christine and John vanderLieck are a husband-and-wife team who own and run Oyama Sausage. John is a fifth generation charcutier . Originally from Germany, he has made sausage all over Europe, becoming a master in the production of artisanal charcuterie.

The Oyama Company originally belonged to Johns uncle, who built the business in the Okanagan. In 2001, after producing meat products in Oyama for 10 years, Christine and John decided to make the move to Vancouver, seeking more diverse urban palates. Making smokies just doesnt cut it after a while, we wanted to make more, Christine recalled.

John currently oversees Oyama sausages from a kitchen in South Vancouver, while their retail outlet at Granville Island is run by Christine. They now make in excess of 400 different products, many of them seasonal. Some of their meats and sausages can take up to a year to cure, so theres a constant turnover of available products.

Oyama tries its best to source their meat locally. Most of their meat comes from British Columbian farms, with a smaller number of Albertan vendors. The meat selected is always free range and devoid of hormones. Wherever possible, certified organic meat is used.

Oyama uses a number of different meats: bison, farmed venison and elk, duck, chicken, pork, wild boar and beef. They make pates and terrines, cold cuts, fresh and smoked sausages, and dry cured products including a slew of salami. They have a cold smoker and a ham room in their kitchen, which are full with an evolving combination of curing meats.

John and Christine delight in bringing old recipes back to life. Many of their recipes were customer requests that made the cut and became company favourites. They also have enjoyed learning different taste combinations from customers. They are currently featuring chicken with lemongrass and teriyaki varieties both from customer suggestions.

Their most popular product? The saucisson sec that my French student brought home. Dont be afraid of that white casing, a mould that acts as a preservative (think brie cheese) and also tastes divine. I tried a version with lavender and another with bits of orange confit: heavenly.

Im also mad for their rillette, a delicious chicken-based spread for baguettes that reminds me of something my grandmother used to make, a sort of delicate jam of succulent meat. And my family wont stop harassing me until we get more of the smoked Mennonite sausage, the most toothsome and delicious smoked sausage Ive had the pleasure of ingesting.

Every month Oyama sells specialty products that reflect a concurrent European festival. January will be Sauerkraut Festival with homemade sauerkraut and Alsatian style smoked sausage. February will see Oyama focus on the tastes of the Charlemagne region of Europe.

We love food, and this is how we express it, Christine says. Its local, its made here by hand, and we take care of it from the beginning to the end, with pride.

willow72@telus.net

twitter.com/willow72