

## Friday is Healthy Butcher Day



Friday is my Healthy Butcher day. I am so enamoured of this store that if the City were to declare every Friday to be Healthy Butcher Day, I would be in full support of this important civic measure.

Six reasons why shopping at the Healthy Butcher is everything a neighbourhood butcher shop experience should be (in no particular order):

1. Animals Come From Farms. These days, when everyone including your grandmother has heard of the 100-mile diet and Michael Pollan, it might be a bit redundant ([and even un-socially-conscious](#)) to extol the virtues of locally raised, organic meat. Nonetheless, organic and locally raised is what you get at the Healthy Butcher. If you point out a nice-looking bit of pork shoulder, say, in the pristine display case, one of the eager young HB staff will be happy to tell you where your pig lived, what it ate, and who its friends were. This afternoon, when I asked for a vacio (more below), Geordie told me that he had just dissected out a beautiful one an hour ago. Going to a knowledgeable neighbourhood butcher like the HB means celebrating the fact that meat doesn't come shrink wrapped on styrofoam, contrary to the sad, sanitized big box supermarket version of the meat story.

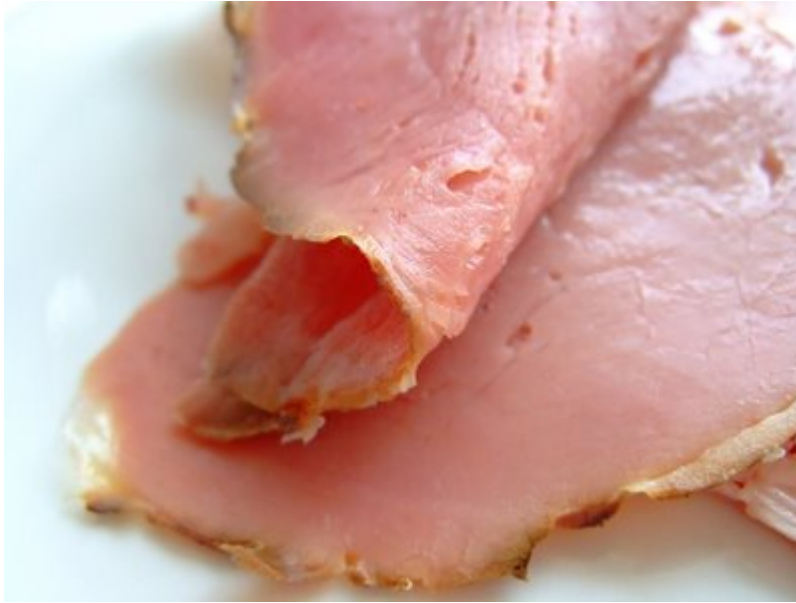
2. The Vacio and Other Choice Cuts. I am constantly hassling the Healthy Butcher about cooking dilemmas. To Ryan (Donovan, Head Butcher): I'm looking for gnul nam (a Chinese cut of beef flank). I want to make pho from scratch. I want to know why my corned beef is so salty. I have a hankering for tendons today. To Daniel: What does a good kidney look like? What's the best cut of pork for pulled pork? Sustainable, whole animal butchery means whole animal eating at home is suddenly easy – and economical too. Buying HB stock bones, for example, is a steal at \$1.99/lb.

The vacio, a cut popular in Argentina, [represents a 35% savings over buying the same weight of rib eye steak](#). Not to mention that purchasing unique cuts from the Healthy Butcher is a darn sight more reassuring than buying them out of a basement meat case, strangely aglow with red light bulbs, at a Chinatown grocer. One listen to Head Chef Jonathan Abrahams waxing poetic about emulsified liver pates, and it makes me want to take each and every one of them home to meet my mom.



3. Make Your Own Sausages. Each month, the Healthy Butcher hosts a series of evening classes on meat and meat cookery – and lately, cheese as well. In June, the HB will teach a hands-on butchery class on poultry, with take-home organic meat loot (I'm heartbroken to be missing it). Private sausage-making classes are also available, and according to Co-owner Mario Fiorucci, ahem, rather popular as a bachelorette party option.

4. Charcuterie. The array of charcuterie at the HB is always expanding and evolving. There seems to be a heartfelt desire at the HB to work toward high quality, completely delicious products. Try the pastrami (they've nailed it). Buy ham that's sliced from a brined, smoked pig's leg, not sketchy bits ground up with fillers and re-formed into a giant rectangular loaf. (Suddenly, the "15% Meat Protein!" claim on the package of ham I saw recently at Loblaws is particularly unsettling.) How about braesola or lardo to accompany Friday cocktails? Maybe there will be pork chorizos (my favourite) on the fresh sausage selection next week!



5. McGee. There is a copy of Harold McGee's legendary *On Food and Cooking* on the shelf in the back next to the spices. 'Nuff said.

6. [Pastoral Scenes with Lambs and Ducks](#). If informative newsletters and on-line ordering aren't reason enough to visit the [Healthy Butcher website](#), the lamb run video and the photo of Ryan and Co-owner Tara Longo cuddling baby ducks (new this month) surely are.

I haven't even touched on the venison pot pies, decent prices on dairy and Maldon salt, the stash of Thuet breads in the front window, and the ease with which special requests are handled.

Catherine: (scanning oil shelf) What happened to that fruity Bioitalia olive oil at the reasonable price point? Nick: Hmm. I'll write it down. Three weeks later, Bioitalia oil is back in stock.

Anyone for an HB smoked ham omelette?



Posted by Sugar and Ink at [5:29 PM](#) 

Tags: [meat](#)

4 comment(s):

[rob](#) said...

They are quite good, aren't they? I bought our Thanksgiving turkey from them last year, and it was excellent (for turkey, at least). I only wish they could find a source for impeccable eggs, then they'd be pretty much perfect. By the way, you forgot to mention that they sell ice cream from Kensington Market Organic Ice Cream.

[May 14, 2007 12:31 AM](#)

[Catherine M](#) said...

I like "for turkey, at least." It's an eternal conflict for me. For holidays I usually give up and go for a nice joint of beef - this past Christmas I splurged on an enormous rib roast from HB and it was sublime. I think I need to root around the freezers more closely next time I'm there.

[May 14, 2007 1:36 AM](#)

[Tracy](#) said...

Probably my favorite store in Toronto! The summer sausage is unbelievable, and the double-smoked bacon has totally ruined me for anything else. And I always get a nice tub of organic lard...mmmm!

[May 18, 2007 12:25 PM](#)

[Catherine M](#) said...

A fellow HB junkie! I love the organic lard too - I keep a tub in the fridge at all times. It's a must for the perfect old-fashioned pie crust, sweet or savory.

[May 18, 2007 12:31 PM](#)