



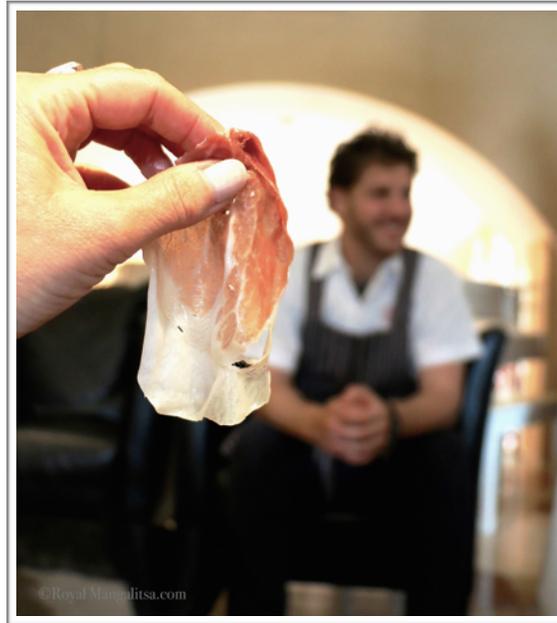
ONLY THE BEST
IS GOOD
ENOUGH

By Wilhelm W. Kohl



Tony Incontro

SALUMIST PAR EXCELLENCE



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SALUMIST PAR EXCELLENCE

HOME OF GREAT FOOD

Napa Valley is one of the greatest destinations for foodies and wine lovers in America, and the reputation of its grapes, and the ever growing number of wineries, are world renowned. It is no wonder that Del Dotto Estate Winery in St. Helena, has found the perfect combination of their wines and Mangalitsa salumi. Foodies just swoon over their cured Mangalitsa products including salami, lardo and hams, cured for no less than 36 months, just like the famous “Pata Negra” of Spain. No better hams are produced in Europe, but the quantity of course is quite limited. You might just have to join their wine club to enjoy it.

Tony Incontro, head artisan and sous chef at Del Dotto Estate Winery is responsible for these delicacies and without question a rising star in the world of cured pork. I call him the Mangalitsa Pig’s secret weapon and if you ever get to taste some of his salumi, from salami to culatello, about 15 versions in total, you will know what I am talking about.

I knew from the first time I met Tony back in 2011 that his skills and devotion as a master pork artisan were unique.

When you salt a ham and then watch it cure for 36 months without knowing for certain how it will turn out, you know what great patience means. Fortunately, his experience, a lot of it by trial and error, has led to creating some of the greatest charcuterie I have ever tasted.

His moto is:
pig,
salt & patience.

Tony, who hails from Omaha, Nebraska, has been infatuated with salumi since he was 8 years old. My notes from our first meeting show that the whole family, from grandfather, father, brother and Tony himself of course, butchered pork together in their garage, turning it into all types of Italian style charcuterie. He does not recall how old he was when he finally got to use the knife, but it seems he has had it in his hands ever since.



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It is Mangalitsas that are the pig of choice for Tony's salumi.

Watching Tony slice into a pig carcass is an experience many people have not had in person, though they can watch him on Youtube. But I can assure you, seeing it first hand that he has tremendous expertise. He can seam out a Mangalitsa like few others, with a speed and efficiency that takes many years to acquire.

Mangalitsas are the pig of choice for Tony's salumi. He loves the Mangalitsa fat, the deep marbeling and red color of its meat. Tony insists *"It is the fat that is the key to great salumi"* and he has been a fan of the breed ever since 2009 when he cut into one for the first time at a restaurant in San Francisco. He immediately fell in love with the beautiful, soft, silk-like and pure white fat – cured into the famous "Lardo" – which is now one of his specialties. Lardo, the cured white backfat of the pig, has only recently

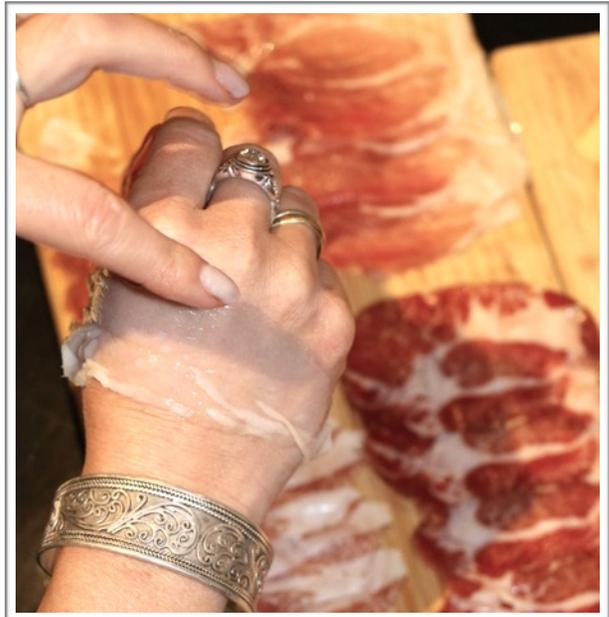
"It is the fat that is the key to great salumi",

been introduced to the American palate and Tony has perfected his style and formula for the last 10 years.

Taking slabs of the pure white fat, he submerges it in a natural brine made out of coarse salt, garlic, black peppercorn and sometimes other spices, then lets it cure in large, very dark containers. His style is based on Colonnata style of curing, practiced in the small town located in the Apuan Alps of northern Tuscany, that makes the best lardo in the world. Produced there since ancient times, it uses the white marble of the region, as curing basins to hold the locally produced pork. The aging occurs naturally over a period of at least 6 months and does not require any additional additives or preservatives.



Lardo Creation



Amazing Lardo



*Let the animals
beautiful attributes
speak for themselves.*

Tony simply believes that paying attention to past traditions in this and many other salume varieties is the very key to making beautiful, elegant and simple cured products. *“Don’t try to get fancy and start trying to recreate the wheel that has been turning for a thousand years. Let the animals beautiful attributes speak for themselves.”*

The results of Tony’s expertise provide happy customers with extra ordinary experiences in flavor and texture and he is gaining a reputation for his products among his fellow artisans and food and renowned wine enthusiasts. To name a few, *The French Laundry* showcased his products at their 20th anniversary celebration.



Mangalitsa pigs at “Winkler Woolly Pigs”

The restaurant at *Meadowood Resort* uses his Lardo and world renowned wine critic Robert Parker Jr. periodically requests that Tony send his choice of cures directly to his residence in Maryland. It’s usually a whole bone-in Mangalitsa ham.

With Tim Winkler’s pigs raised just down the road on open pasture, he is in the lucky position to receive great, consistent quality Mangalitsa pork from a local source.

Starting with a great flavor profile, Tony can work his magic, turning great pork into incredibly tasting salumi. Tony has shown great respect and undeterred interest in Tim’s Mangalitsa farm as well as the Mangalitsa breed in general. More than anybody else in the US, he has been a true advocate for this breed and its place in the charcuterie world.



*Where will Tony
go from here?*

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His Mangalitsa hams, cured for 36 months certainly are equal, if not superior, to any of the well known Spanish Mangalitsa hams. Those of us that have had the good fortune to taste one are excited that Tony will be increasing his production in the near future.

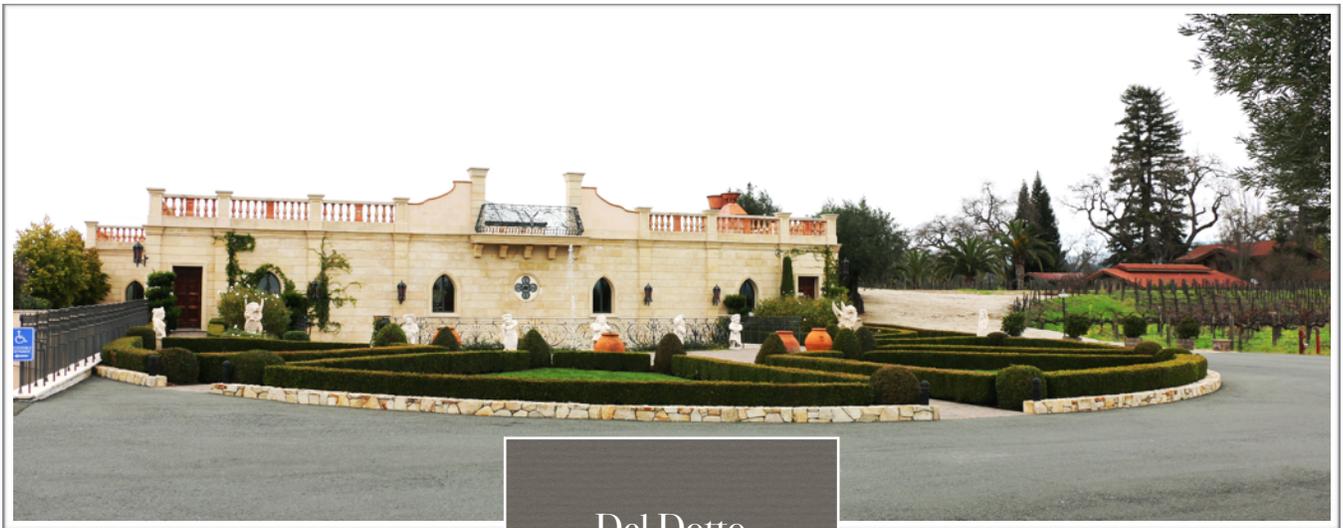
Where will Tony go from here?

Will he start teaching other aspiring pork artisans the tricks of the trade?

Will his dream of owning his own salumeria come true one day?

In the meantime, he has come a long way for a young man of only 29 years of age.

From washing casings in his grandfather's garage at age 8, to head salumist at one of Napa Valley's premiere vineyards, he certainly has a great future ahead of him.



Del Dotto
Winery
Napa Valley



Royal Mangalitsa

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Picture of the Mangalitsa herd on the front page was taken from: sonomamag.com/mangalitsa-pigs by Heather Irwin

