

# BLACK PIG MEAT COMPANY ZAZU KITCHEN & FARM

SEBASTOPOL, CALIFORNIA | CHEFS DUSKIE ESTES & JOHN STEWART

[www.blackpigmeatco.com](http://www.blackpigmeatco.com)

The *Black Pig Meat Company* is “the brainchild” of Chefs Duskie Estes and her husband, John Stewart, of *Zazu Kitchen and Farm*. Duskie and John are first and foremost chefs, but they also have a small farm and process their own charcuterie<sup>1</sup> for the restaurant. They source sustainably grown hogs that they use to make their signature bacon and other pork products, which they distribute through select retail and wholesale outlets from California to New York City.

## Restaurant & meat-processing facility

Six days of the week Duskie and John serve their charcuterie and other items on their restaurant’s menu. Every Tuesday, the restaurant closes so Duskie and John can turn the kitchen into a state-inspected “custom exempt” facility to process meat. This allows them to serve their meats on plates or sell by the pound “to go” at the restaurant. John

became a California Department of Food & Agriculture processing inspector to facilitate this Tuesday ritual, and regional inspectors visit their operation 2-3 times per month, often unannounced. In contrast to the meats that Duskie and John sell at the restaurant, the meat they sell through distributors must be processed at a USDA inspected facility.

## An essential partnership with small farms

Duskie buys her hogs from three small, regional farms and one large farm in Iowa. The three smaller farms (two in California, one in Washington) and the large farm are all careful about what they feed their pigs. Duskie and John widely promote the value of selling quality processed meat (particularly bacon) from animals that are sustainably raised on family farms. The heritage breed pigs they source are well cared for: they are raised without antibiotics or hormones, have vegetarian feed, roam free in pastures, and the sows are not put into farrowing crates to give birth to their piglets. This lets their pigs “just be pigs” and have the freedom to express their “piggyness,” says John. As Duskie emphasizes, “I believe that all animals and especially my pigs should have a great life...and one bad day.”



## Making sustainable bacon

The process Duskie and John use for making bacon is done using the highest standards. The end product has a superior flavor compared to the bacon one usually finds on the market—product that is “wet cured” and injected with salt water and “smoked” with liquid smoke in less than a day. Duskie and John’s bacon is instead dry cured with brown sugar for up to 21 days and finished with applewood smoking for another 12 hours. The *Sonoma Meat Company* and *Carlton Farms* are the only companies who will cure their bacon this way, using Duskie’s recipe. The result of this careful process is bacon unlike any other—balanced with salt, sweetness and real applewood smoke and a satisfying thick-cut meaty strip.

<sup>1</sup>Charcuterie is the branch of cooking devoted to prepared meat products, primarily pork, such as ham, bacon, and sausage -Wikipedia

## *While costly, sustainable bacon is in demand*

Putting the time and care into their bacon and pork products is not cheap. In fact, Duskie says that their meat is 4–5 times more expensive than equivalent commodity products. For a 12 oz package of bacon, she charges \$13–\$14 locally, \$18 in East Bay stores, and \$25 through Williams-Sonoma. Duskie believes consumers need to be educated about the costs of sustainable food; she and John educate customers at the restaurant by providing information about the meat that they serve and the process that goes into raising those animals. She believes their business is successful because she is persistent, committed and willful.



### *History: from chefs to charcuterie*

Duskie and her husband were not always the “King and Queen of Pork” as they have fondly been called. They started off working as chefs in Seattle. The salumi<sup>2</sup> trend was just beginning to surface in the 1980s and 1990s and John wanted to learn how to make salumi from one of the masters. He turned to Armandino Batali, a Boeing engineer who had opened a shop in Seattle called *Salumi*, a successful shop that quickly had food-conscious Seattleites lining up outside.

When Duskie and John then moved to Sebastopol, California, they bought a small farm and started a garden. They opened *Zazu*, complete with a garden behind the restaurant. They now supply about 30% of the produce for the restaurant from the garden. Duskie and John started learning how to make charcuterie from Armandino Battali’s son, celebrity chef Mario Batali, and in 2005 started their meat-processing business by supplying *The Grateful Palate*, a “Bacon of the Month” club, with their salumi. They have been making bacon and other pork products ever since.

<sup>2</sup>Salumi are Italian cold cuts predominantly made from pork

## CHALLENGES | Creating a line of specialty pork products is not easy. Duskie mentions several challenges:

**Using the whole pig.** For small farm suppliers, it is often hard to sell all of the hams. Duskie buys the whole pig, and uses much of its meat in the restaurant by featuring more “exotic” menu items such as “whole honey and chili glazed pig head with toast” (for \$65). To educate consumers Duskie offers “pig tastings” at the restaurant of various parts of the pig cooked in different ways, allowing customers to taste different and less common pig parts. Duskie must also train her kitchen staff about how to cut up and prepare all of the pig. She insists that all of her kitchen staff witness the “One Bad Day” so they understand and respect the meat they are preparing. Using the whole pig is not a means for minimizing costs. In fact, the average dinner meal at her restaurant costs about \$39, including drinks and tax. It would be closer to \$60 if Duskie were to pay everyone the way she would like, but she doesn’t believe customers would be willing to pay such a premium.

**Erratic supply.** Duskie is constantly losing her small suppliers, processors, co-packers or distributors. Some go out of business; some find other customers. She is constantly looking for suppliers who will meet her specifications.

**USDA regulations.** Duskie says that the regulations currently give preference to large producers, especially when it comes to food safety. The cost of meeting all of the regulations is difficult for smaller processors. All of the meat goes through USDA inspection if it is resold to consumers. The California Department of Food and Agriculture inspects the meat that is sold direct to consumers. Her USDA-inspected co-packer in Oregon sells her products to grocery stores and other restaurants.

### Advice to farmers, specialty food manufacturers and others

1. Understand the constraints of mobile slaughter facilities.
2. Use the whole animal as much as possible to reduce waste and provide sales venues for smaller producers.
3. Make value-added products. Duskie and John make “swine sweets peanut butter cups (with chicharones),” “rodeo jax bacon caramel corn,” “cider cracklins,” “bacon piggy pops,” “lip lardo,” and more. These products use other parts of the pig and promote the Black Pig brand.
4. Keep asking and fighting for change in order to create a fairer, more equitable and sustainable food system.
5. Sell direct at farmers markets, especially when beginning a business.
6. Educate consumers about their food so they can make informed choices that support a more sustainable food system.
7. Be Persistent, Committed and Willful.

For more information, contact Gail Feenstra, [gwfeenstra@ucdavis.edu](mailto:gwfeenstra@ucdavis.edu), or Shermain Hardesty, [shermain@primal.ucdavis.edu](mailto:shermain@primal.ucdavis.edu), UC Davis; California team on “Beyond Fresh & Direct” AFRI Project.

**University of California**  
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AGRICULTURAL  
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Profile author: Gail Feenstra

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# A sample Zazu Kitchen and Farm dinner menu from December 2015.

nightingale bakery bread w/ dry creek extra virgin olive oil or clover sweet cream butter ... \$3.5/basket

## salumi from john the butcher...

11 ea. or choose 3 ... 26 or the entire butcher's board! ... 89  
a jar of our pickles ... 5 try with a glass of lambrusco!  
red, white, + green kimchi coppa di testa  
piccante devil's gulch rabbit terrine  
felino liberty duck pate  
sanguinaccio liberty duck ham



bring home the BACON ... \$13.5/pkg  
salumi ... \$39/lb  
a slab of hog jaw bacon... \$11/lb  
bacon hot links ... \$15/pkg

## antipasti from the farmer...

6.5 ea. or choose 3 ... 17  
smoked pepper pepperonata  
ruby beets, verjus, hazelnut  
eggplant + cocoa nib caponata

## from the cheesemaker...

11 ea. or choose 3 ... 22.5  
weirauch "saint rose" (sheep)  
penny royal "boont corners" (sheep + goat)  
shaft's blue (cow)  
fiscalini cheddar pimento cheese (cow)

## **save room!**

baked-to-order pie for 2 a la mode ... 13.5  
order now so it's ready in time for dessert

## starts

RODEO JAX, black pig bacon caramel popcorn ... 4  
black pig bacon wrapped date + harissa ... 2.5 ea.  
liberty duck bun, hoisin, persimmon ... 5.95 ea.  
sonoma dry jack caesar ... 14.5 add boccorones ... +3  
burrata bruschetta, chicories, saba, onion strings ... 15.5  
a bucket of black garlic chicken wings + u-pick-if-u-like anise hyssop ... 12  
brussels + bacon salad, poetzel ranch apples, marcona almonds, bohemian creamery capriago ... 14.5  
lettuces, pomegranates, persimmon, gabriel farm asian pear, redwood hill goat cheese, pistachios ... 14.5  
cup of spicy tomato soup + a tiny bellwether carmody grilled cheese sandwich ... 12

## our handmade pasta

macbryde farm egg noodles, melting leeks, grana padano, egg yolk ... 17  
mostaccioli, short rib + oxtail sugo, backyard rosemary ... 27.5  
chitarra carbonara, black pig pancetta, lacinato kale, sebastopol mushrooms, backyard sage ... 25

## mains

pumpkin risotto, brown butter, backyard sage, preston farm spigarello ... 24.5  
SURF + TURF - mussels + lamb merguez, saffron, fennel, backyard meyer lemon ... 27.5  
diestel turkey tikka masala, sweet dumpling squash, cauliflower, eggplant, black rice, mint yogurt ... 24.5  
liberty duck, preston turnips, farrotto, cranberry chutney ... 29.5  
black wattle pork chop, yukon potatoes, preston spigarello, apple + quince chutney ... 29.5  
the DIRTY burger, bacon-in-the-burger, liberty duck pate, caramelized onions, cider vinegar chicharrón ... 18.5  
grilled flatiron steak, point reyes blue cheese ravioli, ruby chard ... 33  
45 day aged rib eye, escarole bagna cauda, horseradish gremolata ... 49  
porterhouse, grilled romaine caesar, crispy fingerlings ... 85\* (serves 1-4)

## sides

8 ea. or choose 3 ... 19.5  
black pig bacon  
ruby chard, chili flake, garlic  
escarole bagna cauda  
all-american fries + buttermilk dipper

*we make our own bacon & salumi from pigs that roam free. we source local, sustainable, & ethical meats. we farm in three locations in sonoma county: the barlow, macbryde farm in forestville, and davis family vineyards in healdsburg.*

## FAMILY STYLE by 48 hour preorder

the whole beef shank  
+ porcini noodle stroganoff ... 199  
includes one "get shanked @ zazu" t shirt  
serves up to 8-10

a whole honey + chili glazed pig head  
w/ toast ... 65  
serves 8-10 as a starter

*because of multiple counterfeit \$100 bills within sebastopol, we can no longer accept older versions of this bill without the blue strip. we apologize for the inconvenience.*