



BY JENNIFER CHANDLER
PHOTOS BY CHIP CHOCKLEY

Charcuterie — The art of preparing various meats...in order to present them in the most diverse ways (from Larousse Gastronomique)

Curing meats is a labor of love and an outlet for creativity. Edible Memphis looks at three local chefs who are taking the time to cure their own.

Ryan Trimm's interest in charcuterie goes back to his childhood. "When I was young, my great uncle Louie made Italian sausage. It was a big affair. He'd make a huge batch and everyone in the family would get some," Ryan reminisces.

Flash forward a few years and Ryan is now the chef and owner of his own restaurant, Sweet Grass, and his more casual adjacent spot, aptly named Next Door.

"I have been buying whole pigs from local farms like Esther's Day Farm and Newman Farms for the restaurant and decided that charcuterie was the perfect way to help me use the whole pig," Ryan explains. He uses traditional cuts like pork chops, osso bucco, and pork tenderloin for the menu at Sweet Grass and then uses the rest of the pig to make delicacies for the charcuterie plates at Next Door.

Before moving back home to Memphis to open his own place, Ryan worked at one of Charleston, South Carolina's hot dining spots, Slightly North of Broad. "We called it S.N.O.B. for short," he adds with a laugh.

"We did a lot of charcuterie at S.N.O.B.," Ryan recounts. "I showed an interest and, since I was good at it, I quickly became 'the charcu-

terie guy' in the kitchen." On the menu at S.N.O.B. were dishes like liver mousse, pâté, and cured sausages — all menu items that Ryan has brought back home to his own establishment.

At Next Door, the charcuterie menu changes. "The idea behind Next Door is to be a "grown-up" bar where you can grab a craft beer and a snack," Ryan explains. This type of attitude and menu allows people to be able to experiment and try new things.

Ryan has featured head cheese, pickled cow tongue, crispy pigs' ears, rilletes, and numerous pâtés. "Liver mousse is one of my favorites. It's an acquired taste, but I have found that my customers really enjoy the truffle version," he says. "The truffles mask some of that liver-y flavor."

Ryan has recently started preparing cured meats, as well. Look for salami, mortadella, and capicola to appear on the menu. "We just tried our first batch of bacon," he says with a smile, "I can't wait to add that to the menu."

"I also pickle just about anything — cornichons, beets, okra, radishes, and eggs," Ryan adds, referring to the garnishes he prepares for his charcuterie plates. "We have fun with it. Whatever we can use, we do."

At the end of our conversation, Ryan jokingly explains how, when it comes down to it, charcuterie is just like good Southern food. "You know pâté is really just like meatloaf, but instead of adding onions and peppers to the ground pork and fat, we add pistachios and prunes!" *eM*

Sweet Grass / Next Door

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MEAT RELISHES & ACCOMPANIMENTS

PICKLED FIGS

By Ryan Trimm, Sweet Grass

- 1¼ cups granulated sugar, divided
- 2 cups water
- 12 pints of fresh figs
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 6 allspice berries
- 12 cloves
- ¾ cup cider vinegar

Place the water and ¾ cup of sugar in a large stock pot. Bring to a boil over high heat. Add the figs, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the remaining ½ cup sugar, cinnamon, allspice berries, cloves and cider vinegar and stir to combine. Simmer for 10 more minutes. Cool.



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