

Your North Shore Guide to exceptional cuisine

taste



Chef and owner Sebastian Cortez puts together a charcuterie board at Sebastian & Co., his West Vancouver butcher shop and emporium of fine foodstuffs. Cured meats and cheeses present an impressive spread in the photo above right. PHOTOS LISA KING

REVIEW: SEBASTIAN & CO.

Dundarave shop serving up specialty meats

In South America, grilling meats is an art form.

Traditions run deep throughout Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Chile, for example, where regional specialty cuts of meat are attended by preferred methods of preparation and serving, with local signature styles of everything from marinades to grilling devices to condiments.

For Chilean-born chef and Sebastian & Co. owner and chief butcher Sebastian Cortez, bringing unique cuts of meat to the Vancouver market has become a specialty. His stylish West Vancouver butcher shop and emporium of fine foodstuffs is one of



The Dish
Chris Dagenais

the few places in town where you'll find *vacio* (known as *bavette*, in French), for example, a hefty, flavourful, well-marbled cut of beef ideal for grilling and serving to larger groups, like at a family get-together or summertime party.

Now look, I like to fire up the barbecue as much as anyone, but I have to confess that as the summer wears on and the realities of the approaching fall become imminent, I want to spend less time cooking and more time exploiting every last second of sunshine and warmth. At this stage of the season, if I'm having people over, I want to put out something likely to impress but that didn't take me four hours to ready for the occasion.

This is where another of Sebastian & Co.'s specialties enters into the equation: charcuterie. In a shop principally known for top-shelf dry-aged beef and tasty cuts, a subset of goods lies in wait with a view to making life much easier for the home cook.

I love a good charcuterie spread. A well-curated board of cured meats and cheeses lends itself to sharing, promotes

conversation and stands a good chance of satisfying most tastes. I dropped by Sebastian & Co. recently to pick up some goodies for a small gathering.

The trick to shopping for this sort of fare is knowing when to stop. I've never been great at putting on the brakes, so shops like Sebastian & Co. are particularly dangerous for me, with a seemingly endless selection of not only the essential meats and cheeses for a charcuterie spread, but all manner of condiments to accompany them, from pickles to oils to vinegars.

The breakout star of my curated charcuterie selection was duck confit, that traditional French specialty consisting of duck that has been salt-rubbed and then cooked and stored in its own fat. This ages-old method of preparation was historically a way of preserving the meat, but the amazing flavours it produces have ensured its continued popularity. If you have ever attempted the laborious and

See Charcuterie's page 34



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AHOY MATEYS! Pemberton Plaza White Spot employees Gillian Curry, Jessica Noble, Morgan Price, and Maria Barajas are ready for Pirate Pak Day today. The annual event raises money for Zajac Ranch for Children, a charity that provides camp experiences for kids and young adults with life threatening illnesses and chronic disabilities. Two dollars from the sale of every adult Pirate Pak today will be donated to the cause. PHOTO LISA KING

Book looks at options for daily juice diet recipes

Juice Guru, by Steve and Julie Prussack, Robert Rose, 240 pages, \$20.

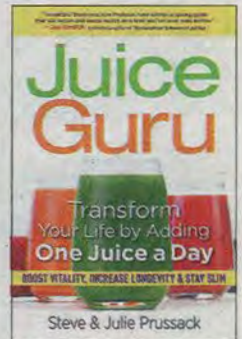
TERRY PETERS
Contributing writer

We all know that fruits and vegetables contain the vitamins, nutrients, minerals and more that we need for a healthy diet but we often fail to include them in our daily food intake.

A simple solution is available in liquid form through juicing. Authors Steve and Julie Prussack provide plenty of information to start a new approach to wellness through a daily juicing in their book *Juice Guru*.

Their recommendation is to start each day with a juice drink and then wait 20 minutes before eating anything else.

The authors claim that juicing on an empty stomach will allow nutrients to be



absorbed quickly and will provide much of your daily requirements of fruit and vegetables.

The first half of the book focuses on the how the body responds to juicing and the benefits it offers. In section three the authors give a list of the core ingredients essential to this approach before presenting an extensive collection of recipes.

Charcuterie's creamy brie cheese indulgent treat

From page 33

messy process of making duck confit yourself, you will appreciate, as I did, the brilliance of encountering it for sale ready-made. Sebastian & Co. has a good inventory of vacuum-sealed individual portions of confit, typically the meaty leg and thigh, packed with a dollop of duck fat, pre-cooked and ready to reheat and serve. After about 20 minutes in the oven, the confit was luxuriously juicy and tender throughout, but with a perfect, crispy layer of salty skin. This was the component of my charcuterie plate that generated the

most enthusiasm among my guests and seemed like a complex, sophisticated offering on my part, despite the facility of its preparation.

Sliced, roast beef (made in-house) was another item I selected and I was very happy to see the roast's bright pink centre, suggesting an ideal medium-rare preparation. In addition to the beef cold cuts, I selected a package of Prosciutto di Parma, succulent, melt-in-your-mouth Italian ham that went strikingly well with fresh basil from the garden and a sphere of bocconcini.

Perhaps the most indulgent item on my charcuterie board was a wedge of unapologetically creamy, pungent, truffled brie cheese. The triple cream cheese had a strip of black truffle puree running through the middle, resulting in a complex and earthy, nearly breathtaking treat that oozed pure decadence when served at room temperature. I have yet to polish off the small portion of this cheese that remains, but I know from past experience it is brilliant when added to scrambled eggs.

A wax-sealed round of extra-old northern Welsh cheddar from Snowdonia Cheese Company called Black Bomber proved to be one of the best cheddars I've eaten, with a tremendous depth of flavour and surprisingly silky, creamy texture.

A coarse, meaty square of duck terrine was a rustic plate component, prepared with generous morsels of heady duck meat and toasted pistachios. The addition of spicy Dijon mustard and a handful of tangy, briny cornichons elevated this tasty pate, which I served with a novel Spanish crispy flatbread from Seville called Torta de Aceite.

The last of my charcuterie items was an admittedly unusual selection, but one I am glad I picked up: a tin of squid in olive oil, also from Spain, from a small hamlet on the Iberian Peninsula named Pontevedra. Spain has a proud tradition of canning specialty seafoods and the products



A variety of fine meats join Ontario Chevrai cheese and Apricot Wensleydale from England. PHOTO LISA KING

are often excellent expressions of the fish and shellfish they feature, which are typically caught, prepared and canned all within a very short time period, ensuring optimum freshness. That certainly was the case with my tin of squid, which was a hit with my guests and a welcome alternative to the more traditional meats and cheeses on the board.

Goods for my charcuterie plate, which served four people, were \$75. Sebastian & Co. is located at 2425 Marine Dr. in West Vancouver. sebastianandco.ca 604-925-1636

Chris Dagenais served as a manager for several restaurants downtown and on the North Shore. A self-described wine fanatic, he earned his sommelier diploma in 2001. He can be reached via email at hungryontheshore@gmail.com. North Shore News dining reviews are conducted anonymously and all meals are paid for by the newspaper.

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