EATING & DRINKING



By Eleanore Park

T'S NOT ALWAYS easy being a meat eater, particularly if you want to do it ethically. And yet Brent Young, owner of the butcher shop the Meat Hook in Brooklyn, N.Y., makes it sound pretty simple. "It comes down to land use and soil health," he said. The Meat Hook sources pork for its mail-order sausage company, launched last spring, from Gibson Farm, an operation that occupies a little under a square mile in Valley Falls, N.Y., using what's known as regenerative agriculture. On the Meat Hook Sausage Co. website, that's defined as "the theory that animals. when managed properly, can be used as a tool to regenerate soil, promote plant growth [and] reverse erosion, desertification, and ultimately climate change."

Ambitious as that might seem, meat produced according to these principles is getting easier to come by, thanks to a new wave of mail-order purveyors delivering sustainably produced sausages nationwide.

Meat products have been available by mail for decades; Omaha Steaks began shipping direct to consumers in the early 1950s. But many butchers entering the field now are committed to land stewardship, animal welfare and supply-chain transparency as well as convenience, and selling beyond a butcher shop's immediate neighborhood promises greater impact. "The big-picture idea here is to create the blueprint for scaling sustainable, regenerative agriculture," said Mr. Young. The Gibson Farm model can eventually be applied at points of production across the country, Meat Hook partner Ben Turley explained, reducing shipping distances and the carbon footprint of the entire operation.

Butchers Jocelyn Guest and Erika Nakamura, formerly of White Gold Butchers in Manhattan, saw the potential in mail order for expanding options for far-flung consumers. "My brother lives in Virginia," said Ms. Guest. "Erika's sister lives in Michigan. They can't just walk into any market and pick up something for their kids that they can necessarily feel good about." This summer, Ms. Nakamura and Ms. Guest introduced their line of sausages, J

'Butchery has always been about making a difference.'

& E Smallgoods, which includes hot dogs, kielbasa and bratwurst, available for purchase online. "Butchery has always been about making a difference in the agricultural landscape and educating people on how to eat better," said Ms. Nakamura. "This has really allowed us to do that on a much, much larger, national scale."

Ms. Guest and Ms. Nakamura source pork for their sausages from farms within a 250-mile radius of New York City that sell midsections of the animal to high-end markets. "We're able to complete the whole-animal circle by taking their trim, backs and fronts to use in our sausage," said Ms. Guest.

Last year, chef and butcher Justin Severino of the restaurants Morcilla, Larder and Cure (now closed), in Pittsburgh, launched Salty Pork Bits, a charcuterie subscription service. Mr. Severino sources most of his meat from Footprints Farm in Gibbon Glade, Pa. And though he cut his teeth breaking down animals at the Michelin-starred Manresa in Los Gatos, Calif., he believes charcuterie shouldn't be pretentious. "At the end of the day, it's preserving food for the future, out of necessity," he said. "The older I get, the more I'm into selling food to people like my parents than trying to make the restaurant version of something."

HOT LINKS / SUSTAINABLE SAUSAGES, DELIVERED

Meat Hook Sausage Company

The offerings here are like a party with all your old pals plus some new, colorful characters. Traditional styles include Classic Italian sausages, Bratwurst and Uncured Beef Hot Dogs. Take a walk on the wild side with a Nachopeño dog or hickory-smoked Serrano Cheddar pork sausage. The Green Chorizo sausage packs a subtle heat and makes a welcome addition to, sav. a breakfast taco of scrambled eggs in a flour tortilla. Sausages are available for delivery within Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens on foodkick.com (from \$12 for 12 ounces), and nationally via murrayscheese.com (\$15 for 12 ounces).

J & E Smallgoods

"We wanted to focus on classic flavors of what each sausage is meant to taste like and where they come from," said Ms. Nakamura. She and her partner Ms. Guest began by perfecting their recipes for bratwurst and kielbasa over several years. They have somehow made these familiar favorites surprisingly flavorful. Sausages (from \$13 for 12 ounces) are all-natural, antibioticand hormone-free, and available in the 48 contiguous states through their website, jesmallaoods.com.

Salty Pork Bits

This subscription program delivers ever-changing variety packs of high-grade charcuterie such as saucisson sec made with lavender, and salami punched up with dehydrated ramp leaves and vermouth. Subscribers nationwide receive quarterly shipments, with the option of local pickup for those in the Pittsburgh area. Right now, the whole-muscle September box (\$65) includes culatello (about 3.5 ounces), fiocco (about 3.5 ounces), pancetta (about 3 ounces) and duck speck (about 2.25 ounces). For subscriptions. go to saltyporkbits.com