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Aquila non capit muscas
(An eagle does not concern itself with catching flies.)

Pellgrisa



Italian excellence

Pellgrisa: the grey pig from Val Riglio, Italy

Genetically improving an animal in order to optimise its pedigree is an arduous task. Developing a new breed of animal starting from its original stock, however, is an extraordinary event.

The creation of the Grey Pig is the result of a long and complicated procedure. We started with the Black Pig from Caserta, in 2003. These animals are used to make dry, cured ham (in Italian, prosciutto) of exquisite organoleptic quality, but they are becoming extinct due to the high cost of raising them and the small quantity of prosciutto they produce. We managed to breed selected Black Pigs with other types of pigs that were phenotypically and epigenetically different, obtaining a strain of exceptional quality.

We can now maintain with absolute certainty that this new breed has all the morphologic and functional characteristics we were searching for.

This is how the Pellgrisa came to be. It is a new star in the field of Italian animal husbandry, raised on land in Val Riglio, Italy. The Grey Pig is much bigger with respect to its black ancestor. Its grey skin is smooth and fine, without bristles. There are the characteristic wattles under its jowls attesting to its ancient origins. The general bone structure is lighter, with bones that are more slender. However, the amount of muscle has increased considerably all over the body, especially in the upper part of the hind legs. More important, the texture of the meat is finer and these animals have a different kind of fat, which infiltrates the muscle more easily.

We had another objective with regards to this selective breeding: the capacity for growing. The Péligrisa has a faster metabolism and a greater rate of meat conversion. The end result is a prosciutto that is superior in quality and quantity to that of the Black Pig from Caserta. It is a new kind of pig, created to face the growing challenges of excellence required by connoisseurs all over the world. It is the fruit of tradition, hard work, scientific know-how and vision.

The final step was to make sure this gourmet pig could produce a prosciutto that would be of even better quality after ten years of curing.

A short history of prosciutto in Italy

*Meat was already being processed and preserved through salting by Etruscan people on the Italian peninsula during the 5th Century BC. During the 2nd Century AD, the Roman Emperor Trajan brought black pigs to Rome that had been discovered in territories bordering the Indian Ocean. These animals quickly spread throughout the Empire. They were small, with wattles under their jowls and void of bristles. The Romans continued in the Etruscan tradition of curing meat in order to preserve it, while famous writers wrote about the particular processing techniques involved in doing this. The Consul Cato, known as "the Censor," provided a definitive recipe for prosciutto in his treatise, *De Agri Cultura*. Lucio Giunio Moderato Columella expounded on it in his book, *De Re Rustica* and Marco Gavio Apicio mentioned it in a study entitled *De Re Coquinaria*. The historian Varrone wrote about legionnaires and their custom of taking prosciutto with them during long military campaigns to feed the army. Even the poet, Giovenale, cited prosciutto in his work, *Satire*.*

The Black Pig was an important adjunct in the homes of Italian farmers until around the middle of the 20th Century. However, the arrival of pigs from Northern Europe that were easier to raise and economically more profitable caused the Black Pig to become virtually extinct.

Where Pellgrisa is produced

The territory of the Val Riglio, in the north of Italy, has always been a special place for the production and curing of different types of meat since the Age of the Etruscans, thanks to its many peculiarities and microclimate. In particular, there is a little valley in the hills outside Piacenza that benefits from a healthy current of Mediterranean Sea air, as well as water from a river that crosses it.

This type of exclusive microclimate favours the very slow maturation process of our prosciutto, exalting its aroma and flavour as it dries gradually. The curing takes ten years, allowing the meat to express itself completely in taste and smell, conveying the wild pastures the pigs grow up in, as well as the particular fragrance and savour of the natural food they eat. All of this can be perceived when the prosciutto is cut and consumed, intoxicating the nose and making the mouth water. The excellent quality of this meat can only come about by utilising ingredients that are pure and in balance with each other. Pellgrisa is a product of great complexity: strong and sensual, delicious tasting with a surprising crescendo of olfactory delights, elegantly aromatic and naturally refined. This is in great part due to the exceptional characteristics of where it is produced. The ham is cured and looked after day by day, putting into practice ancient techniques with great precision, adhering to procedures of another era that have long since been abandoned because of their cost and complexity.

Many products from this area have names that derive from the Piacentine dialect, a way of speaking different from standard Italian,

used in particular by the older generations there. The Grey Pig is no exception. It is referred to as Pèllgrisa by the local farmers (literally 'skin grey') and we decided to give our prosciutto this same name, recognising the importance of territorial tradition.



What grey pigs eat

The Péligrisa feed off products provided exclusively by Nature and the natural habitat in which they live. Raised mostly in the wild and semi-wild, they move about in open and uncultivated spaces. Their food consists of fruits and nuts that fall from trees and shrubs at the height of their maturation process (e.g. chestnuts and acorns), or food whose fragrance rises from the ground: wild herbs, roots and tubers.

The natural products Grey Pigs eat are not genetically modified in any way and come from land where the use of insecticides, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides and chemical fertilisers have been excluded. The air where the Péligrisa are raised and where the prosciutto is cured is absolutely pure, protected by miles of secular forests and mountains.

Antibiotics and any other types of conventional medicine have been rigorously banned. In the rare case a pig needs special care, only homeopathic and/or ozone therapies are employed. The Grey Pigs benefit from a unique farming system, natural food, a perfect micro-climate and a slow maturation process.

What these animals consume in the wild allows their fat to infiltrate deeply into the fine texture of their meat, making Péligrisa prosciutto softer and much more savoury.

The Péligrisa are looked after constantly and carefully. Their food chain and habitat are checked and analysed on a regular basis: water, what they eat and their general wellbeing.

As with wine, the vintages are important. Nature is sovereign; it

doesn't always rain or shine at the propitious moments during the year. The ideal conditions for Péligrisa prosciutto to develop are not always guaranteed. For example, the amount of acorns produced by an oak tree is not constant every year. The same is true of chestnuts, wild herbs and tubers. For this reason, food that can be integrated into their diet needs to be gathered, dried and preserved carefully in special warehouses to assure the pigs have everything they need.

The maturation of wild herbs for the pigs' consumption begins in July. Starting in September, the first acorns, chestnuts, wild apples and pears, as well as fruits and berries from the hawthorn, dogwood, blackthorn, medlar, elder and rosehip fall to the ground. Three types of acorns are integrated into the pigs' diet. They are different regarding the thickness of the outer layer, the sweetness of their pulp and the time it takes for them to ripen. Two types of chestnuts are chosen following the same criteria.

Wild and domestic herbs are cut on sunny days when the moon is waning. This operation takes place in the afternoon, when chlorophyll photosynthesis is at the height of its activity. In this way, the proteins and minerals in the leaves remain intact.

All food used in the integration of the Péligrisa diet are dried using a system of cold ventilation so that their organoleptic properties as well as their nutritional value are unaltered.

Once this food has been carefully prepared, a number of exclusive essences are added to it: the essential oils of chinotto, saffron and thyme, hazelnut oil, four kinds of hops, juniper berries, Ethiopian

coffee, white truffle paste, dried mushrooms, liquorice root and still more. The amount of these essences is determined with great precision so that neither one nor the other will prevail in the taste of the prosciutto. This perfect balance of aromas results in an impeccable harmony of flavour, granting the palate of even the most sophisticated taster an unforgettable sensation. Furthermore, during the final phases of the fattening period, certain other comestibles like carobs, rice, millet, sorghum and amaranth are cooked at a low temperature, allowed to ferment for a brief period of time, warmed again and then given to the pigs to eat. The addition of warm food in their diet helps the pigs to avoid consuming energy and to defend themselves from low temperatures during the winter months.

Taste and Wellbeing

Taste is a rather complex sensorial experience. It is the awareness and synthesis of various elements contained in the food: how it looks, its aroma and its flavours.

Flavours are divided into four general categories: sweet, salty, bitter and sour. The prosciutto that comes from our Pèllgrisa is such that all the aromas and flavours of what these animals have eaten are equally blended so as to assure its extraordinary taste.

That's not all. Our prosciutto is completely natural and very nutritious, rich in protein (made up of amino acids, most of which are 'noble') and trace elements that help to keep the body in good working order. The amount of protein contained in our product is 50% higher than that of fresh meat.

It is also salubrious in that it contains vitamins from the E groups (fundamental antioxidants that eliminate the free radicals in our bodies) and B groups, in particular vitamins B12, B6 and B1, all of which are extremely beneficial to the central nervous system.

The folic acid in the lean parts of the prosciutto makes up for deficiencies that are typical during pregnancy and is a determining factor in the formation of red blood cells for cellular renewal.

The lean and fat of our prosciutto also contain many trace elements like copper, phosphorous, magnesium, zinc, calcium, iron and multiple antioxidant substances.

Pèllgrisa is rich in fatty acids, most of which are made up of oleic, linoleic and linolenic acid. In this sense, it is similar to virgin olive oil. These fatty acids facilitate the production of healthy cholesterol (HDL),

reducing at the same time the amount of bad cholesterol (LDL). Finally, one may notice small, white formations within the fibres of the muscle. This is one of the amino acids of the meat, called tyrosine, which has come together and crystallised. It is of great value because it certifies two leading qualities of Péligris: the long curing process and the very low level of salt.

Processing Pèllgrisa Prosciutto

The only way to get a pig's hind leg to produce Pèllgrisa prosciutto is by choosing an animal born and raised on our farm.

The various steps of processing, from raising the pigs, taking care of them, curing the meat and making sales are exclusively overseen by our organisation.

Only female Grey Pigs that are more than four years old are chosen for the production of Pèllgrisa. That is why the connoisseurs of this extraordinary product book their prosciutto well in advance, even before processing.

Production is limited to 30-40 pieces a year due to the small number of animals, as well as difficulties in raising them in a natural habitat and potential problems associated with a very long curing time. The processing of Pèllgrisa takes place only during the coldest days in winter, rigorously following the phases of the moon. The legs are then trimmed and salted.

Pure, natural salt (rock salt) is the only element used during the processing and curing of our prosciutto. Rock salt, which formed in the prehistoric era, is extracted from mines. An example is pink salt from the Himalayas. It consists of salt crystals that are chemically and bacteriologically pure, void of poisonous products that can be found in all the seas and oceans from which other kinds of salt are extracted. These toxic substances include dioxins, formalin, pesticides, mercuric salts, Nano plastics and many other pollutants, all of which are carcinogens. Natural rock salt does contain some impurities, for example iron (which gives it its pink colour), magnesium and

potassium. These create its bitter taste. To obtain uncontaminated or 'sweet' salt, we separate the minerals by soaking the rock salt in distilled water and then extracting the pure crystals that come to the surface. This is a long and costly process, but it adds greatly to the quality of our product.

The various operations of the processing phase continue until the *Péllgrisa* is ready for its long curing period. It is moved from one space to another according to different levels of humidity and temperature. Only a master-curing expert knows how to manage these displacements, following the course of the seasons, the variation of atmospheric conditions and observing carefully the phases of the moon.

The sweet strawberry grapes, as well as muscat, malvasia and sultana grapes start diffusing their fragrance during the month of August. In antiquity, farmers used to cut long branches of grapevine with the ripest and most aromatic bunches to wrap the prosciutto in. This fragrant enrichment continued until December. Furthermore, during the phases of wine production, the farmers used to pour copious amounts of wine onto the floor of the cellar and the wooden structures contained therein. In this way, the moulds that contributed to the maturation of the prosciutto absorbed the aromas in the air. At the beginning of the curing process, young, red wine was used. Then, later on, the farmers employed young, white wine flavoured with leaves and bark that had been soaked in spicy resin.

This tradition has been maintained in the production of *Péllgrisa* and these procedures are carried out in accordance to current, hygienic regulations.

Bondage

Seasoning Pellgrisa head down is an important innovation in the production of our gourmet prosciutto.

The interweaving of the ropes that support the ham allows the muscular parts of the pig to be perfectly in balance.

In this way, the secretions that form due to salting, humidity and temperature come together in the empty and unused cavities of the hock, taking with them residual salt that penetrates the meat.

The result is sweet, sweet indeed !

Our obsession with this kind of detail and our endless search for perfection is just another aspect that distinguishes us from the rest. Always open to evolution and innovation, we work to bring you only the very best.

Tradition with a Passion

Those who have the great fortune of discovering exclusive traditions also have a chance at changing the world and making it better.

Several years ago, I was introduced to an unwritten and very particular way of processing meat: the massage and tapping of raw prosciutto.

I was told there was an old man from the Piacenza province who excelled in the production of cured meat. After salting and until the end of curing, he would massage the prosciutto with his hands and tap and press the meat with a strange tool made from juniper wood. The purpose of massaging was to allow the salt to penetrate deep into the muscle in a homogeneous way. The tapping and pressing were done to keep the meat tender.

It took many years for us to adapt this complex technique to the production of Péligris. It must be executed every 21 days during curing, following scrupulously and precisely the phases of the moon. Tradition, wisdom, know-how and passion have combined to create a prosciutto of exceptional quality. The connoisseurs of our unique product have expressed their enthusiasm time and again. Péligris is a rare and precious food to which there is no equal.

Maturation and Aging

Péllgrisa is a product that reacts quickly to any variation in humidity and/or temperature. That is why it is easy to spoil irreparably. Dry cold is its worst enemy because it dehydrates the prosciutto, causing it to harden. This results in the meat becoming stringy and tough. Excess heat and humidity can also inflict irreparable damage, weakening its firmness and inducing fermentation of the meat, which makes it unpleasant to smell and taste. The right kind of environment is essential for a complete development of the prosciutto's potential flavour and aroma.

It is important to remember that the meat of the Péllgrisa is in continuous evolution. If it is 'mistreated' in any way, it cannot be restored and will eventually become convalescent, condemned to possible worsening or spoiling.

Péllgrisa can tolerate cool and warm temperatures for a short period of time. However, prolonged dryness, heat or humidity will result in disaster. The best conditions for curing and aging meat are those of a stable climate. That is why when the prosciutto is moved for any reason, it must be carefully checked and protected. One false move and years of passionate and prodigious work will be nullified.

Just like with the most precious wines, Péllgrisa requires constant and competent care in order to age perfectly and express to the best of its ability what it has to offer: intense flavour and aromas, softness, sweetness and the persistence of these in the mouth.

It takes an extremely long period time for the final product to establish its equilibrium and identity itself as Pèllgrisa prosciutto. In this sense, each piece is unique.

A lengthy aging process allows the meat the time it needs to establish a correct balance between the tastes of fat and lean. It unifies everything the product has to offer: aroma, sweetness, softness and flavour, for which it is famous.

A curing process that is well managed takes considerable work, as well as meticulous and constant care. Each leg of Pèllgrisa must be aired carefully and turned clockwise, exposing the lean to different cardinal points according to season, phases of the moon, temperature, the wind and humidity levels. It is then necessary to move the prosciutto to different chambers, keeping in mind that temperature is responsible for the selection of bacteria while humidity aids in the formation of moulds. The same operations mentioned above must be repeated for each aging room, but at different times and in diverse ways.

During the summer months, the prosciutto must be wrapped in natural hemp cloth to defend it from harmful insects. Pèllgrisa is living matter and it needs assistance in developing perfectly and maintaining itself for as long as possible after the abrupt changes it has to go through at the beginning of its maturation process.

The Grey Pig reaches ideal maturity for the production of Pèllgrisa at approximately four or five years of age. Only female pigs that have consumed abundant amounts of fatty foods and aromatic additives during the last year of their lives are chosen to be processed. The compactness and full growth of their meat allow for a long and slow curing process. This is the only way to assure the exclusive characteristics that make Pèllgrisa one of a kind.

A curing expert never confuses the concepts of fermentation and maturation. The former has to do with the biological life of the Pèllgrisa that allows it to develop continuously according to the temperature of the air. The latter has to do with the wise mixing of humidity and aromas absorbed by the meat, granting it a balanced and homogeneous excellence.

The task of following each piece of Pèllgrisa from the first day of its curing to its final performance as culinary delight is the work of masters.

Listening to Mozart

There are forms of apparent madness that can lead to extraordinary results when applied in a smart way.

We were intrigued to learn that several American, British and Israeli universities had done studies on the beneficial effects music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had on the neurovegetative life of people, animals and plants. On the basis of that research, we decided to conduct our own tests on Grey Pigs.

The sonatas for piano K 448 and K 488 by Mozart were recorded and played in some of the spaces where the animals lived. The lower frequencies were gradually limited, filtering them up to 8,000 Hz. Thanks to these very peculiar sound waves, the general physical and psychological state of the pigs improved. There was more harmony amongst the herd and they consumed less energy. Even more surprising, there was an increment in weight gain and the infiltration of intramuscular fat was greater with respect to the past.

We have continued using the music of Mozart to raise the Péligris and enhance our product even though we may never know why it has these beneficial results. On the other hand, if the magic works, why not take advantage of it?

Carving Pellgrisa Prosciutto

The first thing an apprentice learns in a butcher's shop is how to cut and carve the meat. Even before he or she picks up a knife, the master butcher explains that the muscle fibre must be sliced and not followed.

Cutting cured meat is an Italian tradition that has been around for centuries and the mastery of Italian pork butchers is recognised worldwide. These experts must look on in horror every time a prosciutto is carved in the style of the Spanish cortador. Evidently, people who employ this kind of technique have learnt little from humble tradition, opting instead to trick people with presumptuous show. The vertical cut is done by hand with a special carving knife. This technique assures that the muscular fibre is sliced in order to make it softer and more delicate.

The work of a knife must reach perfection while carving Pellgrisa. The Italian master-carver admirably unites two spectacular functions: the dazzling mastery of the blade and the absolute perfection of slicing the muscle.

Enchantment and Ceremony

The moments preceding the first cut of Péligrisa are very special, full of eager anticipation and desire.

Our product fascinates the senses. The different colours enchant the eyes; the nose is taken by the aromas; the sense of touch delighted by the tender meat in the mouth; the taste buds staggered by its favours. Ears perk up as a mystical silence comes over those taking their first bite. For this reason, the ceremony of the carving of our prosciutto is an unforgettable rite, full of mastery and entertainment.

Péligrisa is fixed onto the cutting board so it will not move. The incision of the meat must be clean-cut and not too deep, so as to carve only the amount that is deemed appropriate for the tasting. The slices must be very thin and the knife extremely sharp so that the cut is continuous and not jagged. The master-carver uses a 'wavy' cut, taking off thin curls of prosciutto vertically from the muscle. They are wisp-like purple clouds framed in pink lard that melt in your mouth, unleashing a myriad of flavours. It's important to come into physical contact with the Péligrisa, establishing a mind-body relationship, in order to grasp its true perfection. For this reason, we suggest tasting the prosciutto exclusively with your hands.

Once it has been tasted, a treasure chest will be opened, bringing joy and pleasure to everyone involved. However, at this point, the Péligrisa has been 'wounded'. In order to preserve in time its perfection, it is necessary to cover the part of the muscle that has been cut with thin strips of its own lard.

It goes without saying that it is preferable to consume the entire leg of prosciutto in a very short period of time.

The Seal

Our company has its own quality certification and guarantee: the Seal. Besides guaranteeing the absolute quality of our product, the Seal certifies the entire system of control: the genetics of the pigs, the wholesomeness of the environment, the freedom that comes from pasture farming, the food, the processing, the curing and delivery.

The Seal is also intended to guarantee the ethics of Pèllgrisa production: the necessary time involved in creating the best product possible, the expert knowledge and work of our staff, the craftsmanship involved in the different phases of processing and curing, the absolute quality of our commitment and the hygienic and organoleptic perfection of the food used to raise the pigs.

All this makes the Seal a very significant document. Enclosed therein is everything that goes into the production of Pèllgrisa: a passionate staff, professional expertise, the knowledge, the tradition and the genius. Before giving each leg its Seal, we exercise one final passage. After ten long years of curing, our product is granted a special gesture of love. Thirty days before the first cut, each Pèllgrisa is vaporized with three different kinds of champagne, one every ten days. This particular technique stems from an ancient custom and adds a sublime final touch to our prosciutto, ever faithful to our 'esprit de finesse' in which delicacy, elegance, tenderness, taste and aroma all play a major role. Pèllgrisa has patiently, carefully and knowledgeably been loved, handled and looked after for more than a decade. Only then, providing the master-refiner finds perfection in the leg, can Pèllgrisa be worthy of the Seal.

The Kylix

The ancient Greek kings and Roman emperors knew how to take advantage of the best life had to offer and the kylix, a ceramic cup used mostly to drink wine during symposiums restricted to men, was part of it.

The kylix is a fascinating piece of pottery consisting of a large basin, thin neck and rounded base. The classic golden friezes on a black background used to decorate it take us back centuries to a very different era.

To use one for a Péligris tasting rite creates quite an emotion. The hand holding the kylix brings to the prosciutto the fitting warmth so as to unleash all its organoleptic properties, recreating the same meditative alchemy invoked by the finest cognacs. The myriad of sensations, the pleasure of sharing it with others and the seductive scenery all provide the guests with an unforgettable experience.

To taste Péligris from a kylix is a moment of extraordinary enchantment and gratification. It is an ancient rite and symbol of power in which one seizes the moment to savour something truly extraordinary.

Many suitors, few chosen

Péllgrisa, unique in its exceptional taste, aroma and organoleptic excellence, is destined only for a chosen few. These are the gods and goddesses of good taste and savoir-faire who can afford the most exquisite and valuable prosciutto in the world.

Aquila non capit muscas
(An eagle does not concern itself with catching flies.)

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Péllgrisa is for sale in whole and not in part, only for special events or gifts. Cutting must be performed only by a master-carver available free of charge by our company.

To my father

*a gentleman
and rare example of humility and wisdom*

