



Meet Txanton's Master Cortador, Gerson

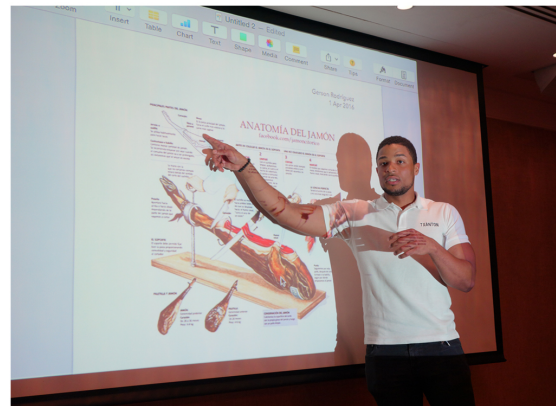
Whether in Spain or in abroad, there is no denying that just about everyone seems to love Spanish jamon. For a 25- year old good-looking guy and a meat carver facing a whole leg of delectable bone-in jamón, the question is how he got into such passion for an iconic and traditional product that Spain is so proud about. Though cortador de jamónes or in lay man's term, jamón cutters make it look easy, it's a skill that requires knowledge, dedication, and a whole lot of practice. Get to know our very own jamon cutter, Gerson Rodriguez as he shares with you what makes his slicing skills so special.

Faith:What are the traits of a great cortador de jamones? **Gerson:** Well, first, one must apply the acquired knowledge in using different jamón knives because as a master cortador, sometimes we have different styles in cutting a piece. We have to make sure that we cut with the right thickness or serve it thinly sliced—slowly, without applying too much force; and second, an excellent jamón carver should be very conscious with how we present ourselves in front of our clients—the posture (standing tall with

a straight back), the hygiene and the cleanliness while we carve jamón (because of course they will eat what we carve), and most importantly, the presentation of the thinly jamón slices in plates.

Faith:Apart from your own style of cutting jamón, are there more than one and what are the preparations?

Gerson: Yes, of course. It depends on the time that you are going to consume the jamón. But first, the jamón stand should be placed at a height and position in which the



jamón can be sliced comfortably without having to strain or adopt an awkward position. Normally, I start cutting the jamón with the hoof either facing up or facing down. If it is going to be exposed for more than two weeks, I start cutting with the hoof facing down, slicing the narrower side, or the "babilla" (the exposed part of the jamón when the hoof is facing down) where the driest part of the jamon is.



In that way, this area does not end up becoming too dry. Although cutting it with the hoof facing down is okay, I prefer cutting it with the hoof facing up. It is also important that in cutting jamón, make parallel slices away from the hoof. The cut surface should be flat, without ridges.

Faith: How do you select a good jamón?

Gerson: I start by touching the "babilla" first, the "maza" (the main part of the jamón, the richest and juiciest) second, and the "punta" last. In this order, I would know if it is sufficiently consistent. Also by pressing a bit of the outside part where the fat is, I would know that the temperature is just right if it stays firm after pressing it. Sometimes we also need to use a "cala". "Cala" is a cow-bone made skewer that we use to prick through the jamón hip bone. After pulling out the "cala," we immediately smell it just to check if the jamón has the right aromas depending on its classification or kind. But, for me, I really think that by touching and pressing the important parts of the jamón is more than enough.

Faith: For the benefit of those who love eating jamón, can you tell the differences between Jamón Ibérico and Jamón Serrano?

Gerson: The most important difference between them is the variety of the pork. For Jamón Serrano, the most used pork is the white variety called Duroc. For the Ibérico, the most used one is the Lampiño variety, the best race of Spanish pork breeding. But just like the Lampiño variety, it has the natural ability of infiltrating fat into the muscles, keeping all the nutrients of what they ate when they were natural fed in the grazing lands. The Duroc or the white varieties of pig are normally fed in farms with cereals.

Faith: Thanks for clearing that up! Among the four types of Jamón Ibérico de Bellota, which one would you recommend that everyone must try?

Gerson: I really like all types of jamón. But if you really want to have a full experience of discovering the different tastes, I suggest having a taste of the six types starting with the jamón Serrano, very basic but nice. Next is, the jamón Ibérico which has a short finish in taste, and finishing with the four jamón de Bellotas—the Guijuelo, Extremadura, Pedroches, and Huelva, all very different from each other with its different twist in flavors.

Faith: I've read somewhere that Spanish jamón is good for you due to its oleic acid [a fatty acid that occurs naturally in animal products.] Should we be eating more jamón?

Gerson: Of course, Jamón Ibérico de Bellota is beneficial for the cardiovascular health. According to several studies its oily acids mono-unsaturated help to diminish the level of cholesterol reducing the risk of suffering pathologies of this type. It also contains great quantity of iron, calcium and Vitamin D that are fundamental to the right growth and strengthening of the bones. So, yes, I recommend adding Jamón Ibérico de Bellota to our daily diets.

Faith: So, to sum it all up, how do you find Philippines as well as the people?

Gerson: I really like the kindness of the people and the way they enjoy life. Plus, I am learning some tagalog words and sentences which are actually cool! MARAMING SALAMAT!

Credits: Christine Faith L. Lopez | © 2016 Txanton Torre Wine & Olive Oil Co., Inc.

TXANTON.COM.PH

2294 CHINO ROCES AVE. EXTENSION, 2ND FLOOR, ALEGRIA ALTA BUILDING, MAKATI CITY, PHILIPPINES
Telephone No.: +63 3 812 2040 local 112