



local provisions

By Erica Marcus

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Hot and sweet, fresh and dried — Licini Brothers sausages at Ceriello Fine Foods.

Feast of the 7 sausages

On Christmas Eve, it's all about the fishes. And on Christmas Day, it's all about the sausages. At least that's the drill at the home of Andrea Ceriello.

The owner of Ceriello's Fine Foods in Williston Park (with branches in Manhattan, New Jersey and Baltimore) was raised outside Naples. But back in the day, working at the original Brooklyn A & S Pork Store alongside other Southern Italians, he learned about the distinctly nonpiscatory Sicilian yuletide practice. "Christmas Eve was one of the busiest days of the year," he said. "All the Sicilians came in and bought sausage. They'd have their fish, go to church, come home and at 12:01 they'd start in on the sausages."

Luckily, he's got access to some very lovely links. At Licini Brothers, a traditional, family-owned salsicceria (sausage factory) in Union City, New Jersey,



Andrea Ceriello is the owner of Ceriello Fine Foods in Williston Park.

sausages are made to his own rigorous specifications using whole muscles — shoulders, bellies — and not scraps. "Look at the sausage in cross section," he said, "you don't want an even color." With the whole muscles you get the clean pink-and-white pattern of a terrazzo floor.

Licini's sweet sopressata is nothing more than pork, salt and pepper. For the hot sopressata, the mixture is spiced with cayenne and paprika (for even dispersion) and a few hot pepper flakes for the odd blast of heat. Finocchiona is a suave Tuscan sausage that's brightened with ground fennel seed, "for a fresher taste."

The cacciatorini, packed in pairs, are aptly named. "Little hunters" refers to their origin as meaty snacks small enough to fit in a hunter's pocket. "There's a little wine in the recipe," Ceriello said, and the grind is finer so that they are more tender — you can hold one in your hand and just bite off a piece."

Licini also makes a fine salomini, a mild, fresh sausage called cotechino in Italy. Poached with lentils, it is a traditional New Year's dish. And this year, Ceriello is debuting salami cotto (cooked salami), which is milder and softer than regular, cured salami. "It's like a little mortadella."

So much for eating sausage. For cooks who want to work that porky goodness into their sauces, there's pancetta — cured, unsmoked bacon that Licini makes from "skinny bellies, so it has more meat, less fat." If it's the fat you desire, head straight for the guanciale, the cured pork jowl that is the sine qua non of spaghetti carbonara.

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