

Pelleh Farms

by Tamar Genger



Leaving the New York City skyscrapers behind and accelerating north toward the Catskills, I was driving away from the morning rush-hour traffic, on a hot and humid July day to visit Eliezer Franklin at his family-owned Farm—Pelleh Poultry in Bethel, New York.

After about an hour on Route 17, heading toward the rugged mountains ahead, the distances between houses grew longer, the grass greener, and the surrounding landscape was dotted with horse stables, red and white barns, and grazing cows. After passing bungalow colonies and the remains of legendary resorts where generations of Jews sought refuge and respite from the cruel summer heat, I pulled into the driveway at Pelleh, surrounded by a pastoral scene fitting for Upstate New York where things move a little slower than the frenetic pace of city life.

The slow pace is just fine for Eliezer, who is proudly showing me around the farm where his father, in 1991, started what is the smallest kosher USDA plant in the country and the only kosher USDA full-service retail slaughterhouse and butchery in operation left in the U.S.

It can be easily forgiven if you've never heard of Pelleh Poultry. It's not your traditional wholesaler and the product is only now becoming available in stores. They have always been a direct "from their farm to your home" operation. For about 3,000 homes

between Brooklyn, Lakewood, and Monsey, the Franklins' farm is the source for Shabbat chicken every week.

I am not sure

how many of you have ever been to a slaughterhouse, but it's not for the squeamish. In fact, at many of the larger processing plants, up to 90 birds a minute meet their inevitable fate. This can lead to errors and compromises and Eliezer is unwilling to compromise. His customers are willing to pay a little more for the privilege of experiencing poultry prepared according to the very highest standards.

Eliezer is 33 years old and a father of five. He lives in Monsey and has been making the daily drive to Pelleh since 2006, when he joined the family business. In an era of increased competition and industry consolidation, Eliezer realized that what worked to keep his father in business for the past 15 years wasn't necessarily going to continue keeping Pelleh in business for the next 15.

"The other plants were quickly catching up with our high kashrus standards, overseen by our esteemed Rav Hamachshir, Rav David Miller Shlit" a, and although we still had an edge over the rest we were having a less-compelling argument," explains Eliezer. "We had to adapt quickly without compromising our standards. We started modernizing our equipment, updating our methods of packaging, and semi-automating in areas that wouldn't jeopardize what we have been so careful to preserve."

It seems to be working. In the past decade, Eliezer has been able to quadruple production by increasing efficiency, without sacrificing the scrupulous attention to detail demanded by their customers.

Eliezer's product has also been able to adapt to changing tastes in the kosher marketplace, and increased consumer interest in trying exotic and rare products difficult to procure elsewhere. Pelleh has been a source for kosher squab, and they now offer duck. The fresh and delicious boneless duck breast and duck legs are immensely popular items for a discerning



clientele. Their duck tastes completely different from duck available at most other kosher markets and butcheries, because Pelleh uses an old-fashioned Long Island duck breed.

In 2011, Eliezer built a test kitchen and smokehouse to further diversify their product line. The result is a full line of preservative-free deli meats and sausages only available to their local retail customers. "All our recipes were and are formulated by our staff in our own facility," says Eliezer. "We don't use mixes, we don't use any fillers or MDM (mechanically de-boned meat) in any of our products."

I tasted the sausages and deli meats and was very impressed by the variety, uniqueness, and depth of flavor. As a dietitian and mother, I also appreciate the focus on all-natural ingredients and using chicken- and turkey-based alternatives to higher-fat beef in sausage and kielbasa.

At this past year's Kosher-Fest, Eliezer's team introduced a Cherry Duck Sausage, a Duck Fry (fake bacon), and Rendered Duck Fat. This fall, they will be launching three more duck products: an Italian Duck Sausage, a Duck Kielbasa, a Duck Rilette, and a Butcher's Cut Young Duckling (two boneless breasts and two legs). Eliezer is also thinking of trying his hand in specialty cholov Yisroel dairy products, like organic milk and yogurt, over the coming year.

The future looks especially bright for Eliezer and, based on my recent tasting, incredibly delicious.

All Pelleh products are under the supervision of Rav David Miller Shit'a and the OU.

RECIPES

BY ISAAC BERNSTEIN



Seared Ducked Breast with Blueberry Agrodoux

Serves: 4

FOR DUCK BREASTS:
2 Pelleh duck breasts

1. Place cold duck breast, skin side down, in a cold sauté pan over medium-high heat and allow the duck breast to slowly render; drain off the fat as needed and reserve for another use.
2. Keep rendering the skin until it is golden brown and crisp (approximately 10 minutes).
3. Turn the breasts over and cook the other side for approximately 4 minutes.

FOR AGRODOUX:
1 bag (12-ounces) frozen blueberries
¼ cup red wine vinegar
½ cup sugar

1. Place frozen berries, sugar, and vinegar into a pot and bring to a simmer.
2. Cook, stirring occasionally, until it thickens slightly.
3. Slice the warm duck breast and spoon the blueberry agrodoux over it.



Grilled Squab With Balsamic Glaze and Grilled Clementine

Serves: 1

Squab is relatively new to the kosher market. Its meat is mildly gamey and makes a perfect appetizer portion. I find that the squab does really well with grilling, as the skin gets crispy and the meat still remains a nice, rosy medium.

I always serve these birds with a sweet and sour garnish, which contrasts nicely with the gamey meat. And the balsamic reduction is good on pretty much anything.

FOR SQUAB:
Squab, butterflied, back bone removed
2 tablespoons balsamic reduction (recipe follows)
Salt and pepper
Olive oil

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.
2. Season squab with salt and pepper and coat well in oil.
3. Place seasoned squab on the grill skin-side down. Grill until skin is golden brown and slightly charred on the edges.
4. Brush the cavity of the squab with balsamic reduction and flip the bird over and grill the other side until cooked through.
5. Brush the skin side with balsamic reduction and place on a plate.
6. Garnish with grilled clementines and a drizzle of balsamic reduction.

FOR GRILLED CLEMENTINE:
1 peeled clementine
Olive oil

1. Cut the clementine in half horizontally, doing your best to keep all the segments together.
2. Brush the two halves with a heavy coating of olive oil and grill, cut side down, until the edges begin to char.
3. Remove to a plate and serve.

FOR BALSAMIC REDUCTION:
400g balsamic vinegar
100g sugar

1. Cook vinegar (bring to a boil and then simmer) until reduced by 75%.
2. Whisk in sugar and remove from flame.



Duck Rilette With Balsamic Cherries and Whole Grain Mustard on Grilled Sourdough

Serves: 6

FOR RILLETTE:
1 loaf sourdough bread, sliced
Whole grain mustard
Flake salt
1 Jar Pelleh Duck Rilette

FOR BALSAMIC CHERRIES:
8 oz. balsamic vinegar
8 oz. dried cherries
8 oz. sugar
2 sprigs thyme

1. Combine ingredients and reduce until the cherries are plump and the liquid is syrupy.
2. Store in the fridge.

To serve:

1. Brush bread slices with olive oil and grill on medium heat (or in a pan) until charred around the edges.
2. While warm, spread the rilette on the bread and garnish with 1 tablespoon whole grain mustard and a few helpings of balsamic cherries.

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