

Sausage Fest!

Weiners, anyone? From brats to bangers, goat meat to pigs' feet, Orange County has all the meat that's fit to be stuffed

| By Joshua Lurie | Photography by Edward Duarte |

Bangers are big news, as are their meat-encased cousins, from andouille to zwiabelmettwurst. Somehow, sausages are sexy again (or at least trendy), rescued from a pound-adding food purgatory by a surge in popularity. And O.C. is suddenly a hot dog hotbed, from classic NYC-style dogs at locals' fave **Carm's Coneys**, now at the Irvine Spectrum (31 Fortune Dr., Irvine, 949.753.1250), to Balinese-style wild boar sausages at the new **Valhalla Table** (2981 Bristol St., Costa Mesa, 714.549.2960). While most chefs aren't willing to commit the time, resources or patience necessary to produce premium encased meats, a handful of area sausage artisans are keeping it fresh.

At **The Golden Truffle** (1767 Newport Blvd., Costa Mesa, 949.645.9858, goldentruffle.com), chef/owner Alan Greeley has been making sausage in Costa Mesa for 30 years, first to prove that he could, and then to experiment and save. Now commercial sausage is readily available, so most chefs don't bother with the necessary staffing, labor, know-how and equipment.

Greeley even runs sausage specials. Think Sicilian lamb with red wine and cheese; bockwurst with veal, pork and cream; and pork with house-cured pancetta and ricotta. "Sausage doesn't have to be meat," says Greeley. "It can be tofu, but I don't want to eat one of those things." No matter the meat, he believes great sausage requires 30 percent fat, good seasoning and the right casing. Bratwurst is a particular Greeley passion. "Good bratwurst is hard to find," he says. "It's either too course, too lean or underseasoned." His brats contain pork shoulder, nutmeg, white pepper and salt and appear in choucroute, or on a bed of grated apples and potatoes.

When Salzburg native William "Willie" Mattern opened **Mattern Sausage & Meats** in 1982 (4327 E. Chapman Ave., Orange, 714.639.3550), there were a lot of Europeans in O.C. Now his Old World sausage primarily appeals to people from the Midwest and East Coast, "since they eat differently from Californians."

"Most of the time when people say 'sausage,' they think bratwurst, Italian or Polish," says Mattern. His list runs deeper, including Portuguese linguica, British bangers and hurka, a Hungarian liver sausage. In general, Mattern uses shoulder meat, explaining, "It costs a little more, but it's better quality of meat because it has texture, it's juicy and there's not too much fat." Order at Mattern's deli counter and grab a seat at a small table. Select sausages are slathered with spicy German

BEST CASE SCENARIO

Clockwise from top: Marché Moderne chef Florent Marneau preparing crispy pig trotter sausage; the charcuterie plate at Charlie Palmer; a house-made grilled sausage sandwich at Valhalla Table; Marché's plated pig trotter sausage.



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mustard, layered with sauerkraut and served on a French roll.

Sabatino's Sausage Company (251 Shipyard Way, Newport Beach, 949.723.0645, sabatinoschicagosausage.com) is a family-run restaurant and deli with roots in 1864 Sicily. That's when the Sabatinos started making sausage. The family brought over the recipe from Palermo in the '20s, and after a stop in Chicago, they settled in Orange County. Now Peter Sabatino oversees the business

next to the marina, with Venetian murals on the wall and sausage coiled in a deli case.

Sabatino's well-seasoned Italian sausage is available in ravioli with ricotta, topped with marinara, Alfredo and bell pepper sauces; or stuffed into chicken breast with spinach and ricotta in a mushroom Marsala sauce. Most order the sausage on a sizzling platter with peppers and onions. Cut into a crisp-skinned link and it oozes Sicilian goat's milk cheese.

South Coast Plaza has become an



THE MISSING LINK

Clockwise from top left: The dining room at Marché Moderne; chef Mark Boble at Valhalla Table; Charlie Palmer chef Amar Santana slices his house-cured sausages for the charcuterie plate.

encased-meat beacon. At **Marché Moderne** (3333 Bristol St., Costa Mesa, 714.434.7900, marchemoderne.net) chef/co-owner Florent Marneau makes sausage because, he says, “It’s fun and it’s creative. It’s a hard business, and it just makes me happy.” Also, “Too much sausage, when you buy it in the store, it’s oversalted and you don’t taste the quality of the pork.”

Marneau goes beyond the brat with options like crispy pig trotter sausage. He braises pig foot with garlic, salt and pepper before filling hog casings with foot and shoulder meat. He sears slices until they’re crispy outside, then serves them over beluga lentils with poached egg and sauce Bordelaise. Frisée and walnut vinaigrette cut the richness.

Marneau also makes merguez using lamb shoulder and spices like cumin, garlic and harissa, serving it over traditional Moroccan couscous with lamb ribeye, cilantro, chermoula, Medjool dates and garbanzo beans, cooling the palate with mint emulsion and yogurt.

Across South Coast Plaza at **Charlie Palmer at Bloomingdale’s** (3333 Bristol St., Costa Mesa, 714.352.2525, charliepalmer.com), executive chef Amar Santana runs a house-made sausage program. He makes 10 different kinds of sausage, including summer sausage, red wine sausage and landjager, which was developed by Bavarian hunters.

“It is a lost art,” says Santana. “Lots of chefs prefer buying [sausage] to making their own because it’s easier. Plus you can make different ones with different flavors, meats and fat content.” Santana prefers pork butt, beef top round and fat back when making links.

In O.C. you don’t need a Euro connection to create compelling sausage. Little Saigon is a hotbed for house-made meats, especially at restaurants that specialize in *7 mon* or *8 mon*, seven or eight variations on a single protein. **Nhu-Y** (10830 Warner Ave., Fountain Valley, 714.963.1700) means “satisfaction” in English, and the restaurant features *ca 8 mon*, eight courses of fish. The nine-year-old restaurant also utilizes freshwater bass in courses like *ca mo chai*, cigarette-shaped fish sausages encased in aromatic Hawaiian *la lot* leaves.

Binh Dan is due north in Westminster (10040 McFadden Ave., 714.839.7050) and specializes in *de 7 mon*, seven courses of goat. Get past the plate of congealed goat’s blood layered with sheets of goat liver and you’ll receive the comparatively tame *de nuong la lot mo chai*, goat sausage encased in caul meat. The amniotic membrane melts into the betel-leaf flecked ground meat, creating caramelization. The links are showered with crushed peanuts for texture’s sake.

Garden Grove’s **Thien An** (13518 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, 714.530.4955) completes the edible menagerie, offering *bo 7 mon*, seven courses of beef. The selection includes *bo nuong la lop*, similar to Greek dolma, with heavily spiced beef wrapped in *la lot* leaves and grilled. *Bo nuong mo chai* are well-seasoned and wrapped in a thin layer of fat that melts into the sausage.

With all these options, O.C. chefs are proving that sausages may be stuffed, but there’s no filler. **R**