



Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma 50th Anniversary Media Kit



History of the Consorzio

Although 2013 marks the 50th Anniversary of the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma, the producers whose interests they represent have been at it for thousands of years. The earliest references to Prosciutto di Parma date back all the way to Roman times and the famous ham even makes a cameo in the world's first mock heroic poem by Alessandro Tassoni, *La secchia rapita* (The Rape of the Bucket) published in 1622.



The Consorzio was established in 1963 by 23 producers producing 53,000 branded hams who wanted to protect and promote their product throughout the world. Since then, the Consorzio has grown into a family of 156 Prosciutto di Parma producers supplying 10 million hams annually to markets all over the world. The production of every Prosciutto di Parma is still regulated by the strict laws defining the quality characteristics of Prosciutto di Parma, identified by the Parma Crown branded on every ham.

In 1996, largely due to the efforts of the Consorzio, Parma Ham became one of the first products to be awarded the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status. PDO is a European Community certification system designed to protect names and traditions of high-quality European foods made according to traditional methods in a defined geographic region.



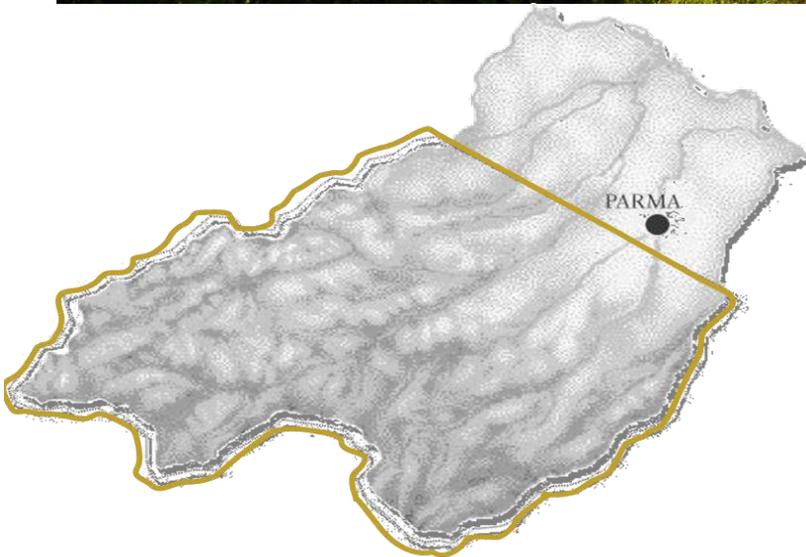
Original Parma Crown from 1963



The Parma Crown today



Production Area



Prosciutto di Parma can be produced only in the gently rolling countryside surrounding the city of Parma, most notably in the area of Langhirano. The air is dry and sweet, with aromatic breezes from the Apennine mountains creating the perfect environmental conditions for the natural "drying" of the hams. At a point in the curing process, the hams are moved to airy rooms, where the windows are opened to aromatic breezes that dry and cure the hams, and impart a special flavor.



Only Italy's Finest Pigs

Prosciutto di Parma is allowed to be produced only from three specially-selected pig breeds raised in 11 regions of Italy. Unlike most other hams, the pigs must reach nine months of age and weigh at least 350 pounds. Other cured hams are allowed to be produced from pigs imported from other countries in the EU such as Poland and Hungary.



Parma pigs are fed a special diet consisting of a mixture of grains and whey from Parmigiano-Reggiano production that takes place in the same region of Emilia-Romagna and can confer a certain nutty taste to Prosciutto di Parma.

Each piglet receives a breeder tattoo indicating the farm it was raised within the first 30 days of its life, and can still be found on the end product that receives the Parma crown.



The Process

After the pork legs reach the prosciuttificio (processing plant), each ham is tagged with a button indicating the date it began curing. Next, salting is done by hand in the traditional way, by the maestro salatore, or salt master, who uses only the minimal amount of sea salt necessary and whose expertise contributes to Prosciutto di Parma having less salt than other cured hams. Sea salt is the only “preservative” ever added.



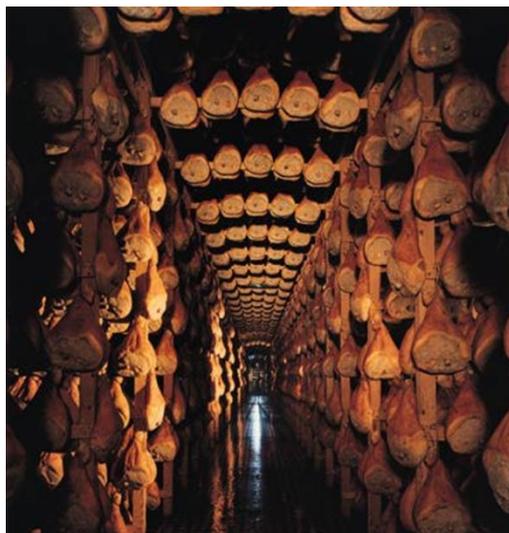
The hams are held for 100 days in climate-controlled refrigerated rooms to ensure that the meat absorbs exactly the right amount of sea salt.

Then they are rinsed and moved to large airy rooms, that allow the hams to cure in the dry breezes that blow through the region.



After about four months, the exposed surfaces of the meat are coated with lard to soften them and help control the rate of moisture loss.

The hams are transferred to cellars for additional aging. Gradually the hams lose about 30% of their total weight, helping to concentrate the flavor.



Making the Cut



After 400 days, it is time for the quality check. An independent inspector pierces the ham in several locations with a horse bone needle, sniffing it after each puncture to check for scents that may indicate that the ham has any flaws or spoilage.

The horse bone has no odor and holds a scent for only 20 seconds at a time, making it an ideal tool for these quality checks.



Only hams that meet the high standards become Prosciutto di Parma and are fire-branded with the Parma Crown.

Prosciutto di Parma is also sold pre-sliced, but it can only be sliced and packaged in Parma and must include the crown in the upper left corner of packaging so that it is easily identifiable and to protect consumers from fraud.



Buying and Using Prosciutto di Parma



Every leg of Prosciutto di Parma is aged for at least 400 days and up to 36 months. As Prosciutto di Parma ages, the flavor becomes less salty, more complex, and drier in texture. Use younger ages for cooking and enjoy longer aged legs as-is.

When purchasing Prosciutto di Parma always look for the Parma Crown. Even if the crown has been washed away or is hard to see, there are other indicators of authenticity – such as the tattoo that each piglet receives and the button signifying the beginning of the curing process.

Prosciutto di Parma is meant to be served with a ring of fat around each slice of about 1-1 ½ inch thickness - this lends essential flavor and helps to keep slices fresh.

Many delis and butchers will save the short end of the Prosciutto di Parma and sell it whole. This piece of the prosciutto has some of the sweetest flavor and is best used diced and julienned for dishes that call for cooked Prosciutto di Parma and can also be used to flavor soups and sauces.

Prosciutto di Parma is delicious on its own or as part of an antipasto or charcuterie platter with cheese, nuts and fruit. Topping a hot pizza with Prosciutto di Parma or adding it to pasta and sandwiches are easy ways to add flavor. Prosciutto di Parma pairs well with a fruity white wine but is also classically paired with Lambrusco – a sparkling red wine also from the Emilia-Romagna region.



It's not Prosciutto. It's Prosciutto di Parma.



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