

## LaScola illustrates nose to tail cooking with Hogtoberfest

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"And that's pig 101," chef Matt Jennings declared last Saturday as he and American Seasons chef Michael LaScola finished butchering a 50-pound pig in the kitchen of the popular Centre Street restaurant.

The demonstration, in which Jennings and LaScola showed a small audience how to use every part of a pig, from tail to snout, was the opening event in what LaScola hopes will become an annual ritual on Nantucket: Hogtoberfest, a celebration of the pig and the countless ways to prepare and consume it.

Besides the demonstration last Saturday morning, the first Hogtoberfest included a pork and beer tasting event at the Cisco brewery, a "pig candy" session that introduced attendees to such delicacies as "chocolate bacon bark," and finally a Sunday evening all-pork dinner, in which the courses were paired with organic beer and wine from American Seasons' all-American wine list.

The front door of American Seasons is adorned with a small pig decoration, and pork is one of LaScola's favorite ingredients to use in the refined regional cuisine the restaurant has become known for. The concept for Hogtoberfest was born out of a conversation earlier this year between LaScola and his old

friend Jennings, who once worked at 21 Federal on Nantucket and is now the chef at the Providence, Rhode Island-based restaurant La Laiterie.

"We're at the same point in our careers and we always meet up, so this year we started talking, and a friend said we should do a dinner together and it turned into this," said LaScola, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America who runs the restaurant with his wife, Orla Murphy-LaScola. "The dinner was great. We had about 35 people at one big, communal table and with the weather the way it was, we had four hours of eating pork products."

While "chocolate bacon bark" may not be people's short list of their favorite deserts, LaScola said the pairing of salty bacon and sweet chocolate made for a surprisingly tasty combination that people enjoy—if they have the guts to try to it.

Not for the squeamish, Saturday morning's demonstration began with LaScola and Jennings removing the head of the 50-pound pig, and showing the small audience where different cuts of meat come from on the pig, such as bacon, ham, tenderloin and pork chops. Both chefs said they considered it important for people to see the entire animal their food comes from before consuming it.

"It's important to do this stuff," LaScola said. "People love

bacon, but they don't think it comes from this guy running around before they eat it."

Jennings agreed.

"You never get to see the whole animal," Jennings said. "Whatever approach gives you the most use out of the animal is the best."

While he talked about the traditional cuts of meat that come from a pig, Jennings appeared more excited about preparing certain parts of its anatomy that people rarely consume, such as different sections of the head.

"The heads are so versatile, there's so much meat in there," said Jennings, who went on to describe how to use pig ears, jowls and tongue. One tip Jennings offered for anyone attempting to prepare their own pig head at home: "It's good to give them a little shave before you cook them."

While the weekend storm may have hindered the inaugural Hogtoberfest, LaScola said the Sunday dinner, as well as the pork and beer tasting at the Cisco brewery, were both well-attended and that he intended to bring the event back next year.

"We want to do it every year," LaScola said. "We may change the timing, but for the first time doing this, it was great. Now we know what to do next year."





Photo by Nicole Hamishfeger

**Michael LaScola** of American Seasons is host to "back-of-house" demo of a small pig and how to maximize the meat to be used in other Hogtoberfest events Saturday, Oct. 17. Also Matt Jennings of Farmstead & La Laiterie is the guest chef to kick off this annual event in the first year.