



DOWN — ON — THE — FARM



Shirlee Posner of Eat Surrey seeks and finds the best small food producers, restaurants, cafés, pubs and shops, publishing a weekly review on her website. This month, she introduces us to a friendly, family run farm shop, plant nursery and newly opened café, Elm Nursery and Joe's Farm Shop.

This story starts in the mid 1980s when Rita Thorpe, mum to Emma and Katie, decided she wanted a bigger back garden. The small farm she bought with her late husband just happened to be a going concern housing a popular farm shop.

When a large supermarket opened down the road in Burpham, the farm shop trade disappeared overnight. Rita realised she had to change tack, and being an adaptable person with a keen interest in horticulture, she read every plant growing manual she could find. With a newly developed set of green fingers she launched Elm Farm Nursery.

Up until a few years ago, the farm shop just had a few eggs, some pet food and jam for sale. Its direction changed when local farmer Joe popped in to propose to Emma, but it was meat not matrimony on offer.

He has a small-holding where he rears beef cattle and he needed to find a retail outlet. In addition he had some pigs and a few sheep that needed looking after. The idea appealed, and feeling the timing was right, they launched Joe's Farm Shop at Elm Farm Nursery.

The shop has its own steady supply of free-range pork, beef and lamb, all traditionally reared, and whilst it's not certified organic, it's

as good as. I have been buying meat from Joe's Farm Shop for the last five years and it never disappoints. Full flavoured from being matured properly and tender whatever the cut. This is a benefit from animals being humanely slaughtered and hung until top quality is guaranteed. Sausages are made for the shop at JL Butchers (rare breed specialists) in West Byfleet using Joe's Farm pork. The shop also brings turkeys in from a farm in Oxfordshire for Christmas to complement its hams, sausages and beef. Hogget is sometimes on offer and there is a barbecue range in the summer.

In addition to meat, Joe's Farm Shop also stocks local milk and cheese (Norbury Blue, Dirty Vicar and a selection from High Weald) plus its own free range goose, duck, hen and bantam eggs.

Growing a small selection of fresh produce on site, in the summer there are freshly picked courgettes, squash, tomatoes and cucumbers for sale.

More recently, the shop has also been selling delicious meat pies supplied by local chef Jaqui Street. Using Joe's Farm meat she has been baking wonderful savouries, sausage rolls, scotch eggs, pies and quiche to sell in the shop. This has been so successful that a

partnership has been formed and the Elm Kitchen Café is opening its doors in May 2015.

In a new purpose built space, the Café has a garden surrounded by rabbits, bantams, geese and ducks. It's a great place for families to enjoy a hearty cooked breakfast, delicious lunches and hand-baked cakes for tea. You can also buy feed for children to nourish the chickens and bantams in the shop.

Keep your hopes levelled though when you visit. Elm Nursery and Joe's Farm Shop is a relaxed family affair, bereft of high-powered marketing and slick advertising, but it is hard not to love it. Perhaps it's because the chickens sometimes visit the shop, or because Rita, Emma, Katie and the team are always happy to see visitors. For me, part of the deal is the ethical food shopping providing local employment and a livelihood for the owners. ●

essence info

Elm Nursery and Joe's Farm Shop
Sutton Green Road, Sutton Green,
Guildford, Surrey GU4 7QD
Telephone: 01483 755559
Websites: www.elmnursery.co.uk
www.eatsurrey.co



Pan fried pork fillet, with oven roast sweet potato chips and purple sprouting broccoli

This is the sort of meal I like to throw together on a Friday night if we have had a really busy week. I buy almost all my pork from Joe's Farm as its full flavoured with a proper grainy texture. Making a white wine reduction with a spoon of something luxuriously creamy just adds a touch of celebration to the plate. Use regular spuds if you don't like sweet and experiment with asparagus or whole green beans.

Serves two

Sweet potato chips:

Two large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into two centimetre squared chunks
One tablespoon olive oil
One clove crushed garlic
Smoked sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the pork:

One pork fillet (approximately 275-300g), cut into two to three centimetre medallions
Two cloves crushed garlic
One to two teaspoons fresh chopped rosemary
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Four to six tablespoons dry white wine
40g light or regular mascarpone

Pre-heat the oven to 200°C.

1. Firstly, prepare the sweet potato chips. Combine the garlic and olive oil in a bowl and add the sweet potato. Toss well to coat then tip onto a baking sheet. Roast for 25-30 minutes.
2. Place the pork on a chopping board and beat with a meat hammer until it is one centimetre thick (or place the meat between two sheets of cling wrap and bash with a rolling pin). Sprinkle the meat with salt and freshly ground black pepper. When ready to cook the pork, put the broccoli in a steamer to soften.
3. Heat the olive oil in a heavy base pan with lid. Add the garlic and pork to the pan and cook for two to three minutes on either side. Sprinkle with rosemary and cook covered for five minutes.
4. To serve: divide the chips between two hot plates and top with broccoli. Arrange the pork slices on top. Add the white wine to the pan in which the pork was cooked and turn up the heat to reduce the liquid. When it has reduced by half, stir in the mascarpone. As soon as the mixture bubbles remove it from the heat. Drizzle the sauce over the meat and serve immediately.

Shirlee Posner



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TO ARTISAN FOOD PRODUCERS

Shirlee's food reviews of independently owned cafes, restaurants, artisan food producers and farm shops in Surrey. A supporter of the local food movement with an aim to promote, support and champion their work. I always tell a personal story by taking the time to meet the people behind the products or the brand.

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