

# RestaurantNews

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## Travelling road show samples European gourmet foods

TORONTO—The man who stood shaving slices off a pig's leg in November, at a table in a building where whiskey mash was fermented in the 19th century, is leading a charge of Spanish pig legs into Canada.

The occasion was the first stop of European Gourmet Products, a three-year road show of special Mediterranean foods and wines that is scheduled to travel to several Canadian and U.S. cities, returning to Toronto in 2006.

A release says this marks the first time France, Italy, Portugal and Spain have joined together "to promote the quality, traditions, flavours and health benefits of their exquisite food and wine delicacies, and to communicate the high standards of safety set by the European Union."

In the case of the man slicing the meat, Michael Tkaczuk, the product is Serrano ham from Spain, competing with Italy's prosciutto for space in restaurant kitchens in other parts of the world.

Tkaczuk, a former hotel and restaurant chef who spent the past five years working with an importer of specialty foods and wines, recently started his own importing company, Catch International, in partnership with his wife Gieselle Baerveldt. They set up a division, Serrano Imports, to bring the melt-in-your-mouth ham to Canada.

His first load was 1000 hams, brought in to supply customers that included Toronto restaurants Bouchon, Jamie Kennedy Wine Bar, the Fifth and a some establishments in the Oliver Bonacini group.

Serrano Imports is selling meat from Campofrio, Spain's largest producer of Serrano ham, with a 13 per cent market share of its domestic market and sales in more than 45 countries.

Campofrio is one of about 40 companies taking part in the food and wine show tour, which kicked off with the European Gourmet Products show in Toronto's Distillery District.

About 40 per cent of firms have Canadian distributors and the others are looking for them.

There are six categories represented in the project: wine, cheese, olives and olive oils, meat products, pasta and desserts, and vegetables and specialty products.

While some are too small for foodservice distributors, others definitely have the volume needed to supply the restaurant business.

The latter group includes Todolivo, S.L., a Spanish olive oil producer that has orchards in Italy and Spain. Todolivo's director export division, Francisco Pérez Moreno, said the company produces 500,000 kilos of oil annually and is looking for Canadian distribution.

Todolivo only uses fruit from its best orchards to make the mild, sweet Gran Seleccion brand, which it sampled in Toronto. This is oil too good to cook with, pointed out Pérez Moreno. It is used on salads and as a condiment in high-end restaurants.

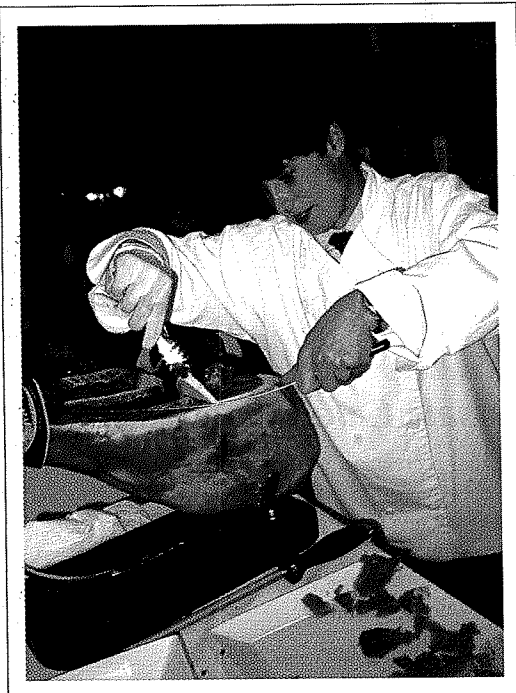
Perhaps it could be drizzled on some nice cheese from Fromagerie de l'Ermitage, a company that markets the 38,000 tonnes of cheese that is made annually on 1,500 farms in France. Ermitage is sold in Quebec and the French firm is trying to crack the Ontario market.

One company planning to come into

Ontario this year is Salumificio Baldo S.r.l. In November the Italian meat processor was awaiting an export licence for its mortadella bologna, which restaurants could use for appetizers or for cooking Italian dishes such as tortellini, suggested export manager Daniela Buvoli.

The person overseeing the effort to establish the special products from the four European countries in North America is a Spaniard, Iñigo Cañedo, director of Sarum Estrategias Agroalimentarias, based in Madrid.

His phone number is 91 577 45 82, fax 91 577 96 25 and e-mail inigo.canedo@terra.es.



Michael Tkaczuk is selling Serrano ham to restaurateurs and retailers in Canada