



A Spanish Treat Is Near

Fans of jamón Ibérico, Spain's legendary fatty cured pork, no longer have to go to Spain to satisfy their cravings.

Starting this week, Jaleo, a popular restaurant and tapas bar in Washington, will be the first restaurant in the United States to serve Ibérico products, above, made from a breed of black-hoofed Iberian hogs native to Spain. Spanish meat products exported to the States must be made from animals slaughtered at plants that meet safety and sanitation standards of the Food Safety and Inspection Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. Until recently, there were none in Spain that did.

But last July, Embutidos Fermín in La Alberca became the first certified Spanish slaughterhouse eligible to export the products to the States. The chef of Jaleo, José Andrés, teamed up with the company and the Rodgers Collection, a fine-foods importer, to bring Ibérico products over.

Jamón Ibérico, a Spanish delicacy as coveted by foodies as Beluga caviar or Kobe beef and which can retail for as much as \$45 a pound, won't be available until winter 2007. Premium jamón Ibérico de bellota, made from pigs born in the spring and fattened on fallen acorns, is expected to be available in the summer of 2008. But Jaleo will begin serving tapas of Ibérico chorizo and salchicón this month with prices from \$7 to \$12 a plate. Information: (202) 628-7949, www.jaleo.com. Other restaurants and food stores are expected to follow soon.