

# Hamming it up



**Posh Nosh**  
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"Have you had the kurobuta ham at Huber's Butchery?" a friend asks in a text message.

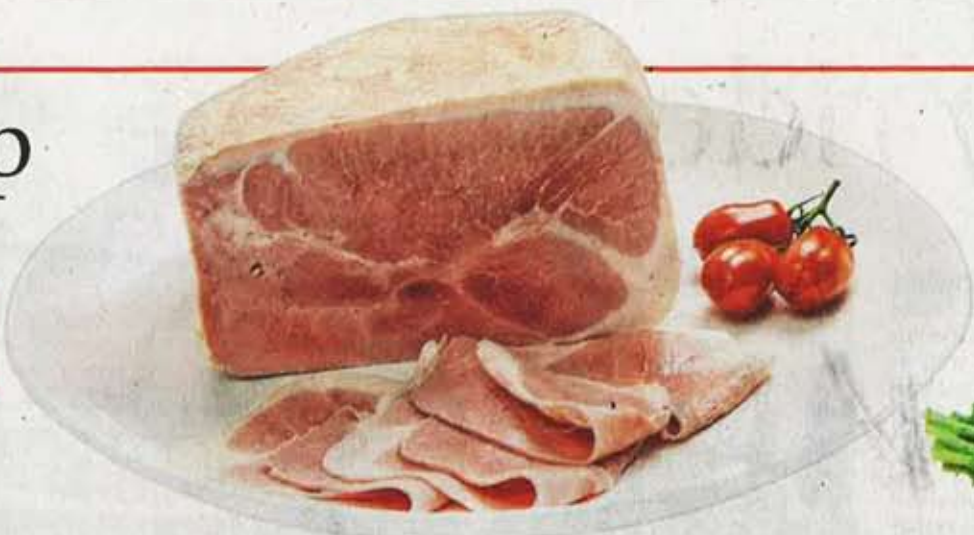
Well, no. For reasons unknown to me, some people seem to think I have eaten everything on earth. I wish I have sometimes. An encyclopaedic knowledge is never a bad thing. So to add to my taste memory bank, I decide to try a sliver of the ham and that's when I know why my friend keeps raving about it.

The ham, made with well-marbled Berkshire hogs renowned for their flavour, has a delicate sweetness and is not ferociously salty like some charcuterie can be. The strips of fat, pretty white bands that streak through the pink meat, keep the slices juicy and moist.

Although I would be happy to just eat slices on their own, they taste even better in a sandwich, the bread spread with salted butter. Thin cucumber slices make a very fine addition.

Let it sit for about 15 minutes to allow the flavours to meld before eating.

The butcher will slice the ham as thickly or thinly



as you want, but I like it shaved very thin. Have him wrap it in paper, rather than sealed in a bag. This way, the ham does not get compressed and break apart when you try to separate the slices.

Now, I'm looking for a bone-in, whole leg of kurobuta ham. Think how beautiful it would look on a Christmas table, and how happy my guests – and yours – would be.

**Kurobuta ham, \$4.30 for 100g at Huber's Butchery, 18A Dempsey Road, tel: 6737-1588, open: 9.30am to 8pm (weekdays), 9.30am to 7pm (weekends)**

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## Bubble limes

Sometimes, fruit and vegetables arrive in Singapore ahead of their time. Some years ago, I saw finger limes in a supermarket and bought two trays. When I went back for more, they were languishing in the vegetable section, their green skins brown, the fruit wrinkled. I suppose nobody knew what to do with them.

Naturally, they disappeared and were not seen again.

Some things do find their way back and FairPrice Finest supermarkets have brought in finger limes from Western Australia. I hope this is the right time for them.

These limes are unusual in that they are finger-shaped. Apart from green skin, there are some, like these ones, that sport brownish red ones.

Unlike round, green limes, the juice sacs of finger limes are spherical and look like small bubbles. They also have a thicker membrane than most citrus sacs and pop in a delightful way.

It is hard, looking at the fruit, to figure out the best way to get the spheres out. Just slice it in half cross-wise on the diagonal and squeeze firmly. The spheres will come tumbling out. Continue squeezing further up each half to liberate those at the top.



Sometimes, the juice is very tart, but these ones are less so and taste a little like pomelo mixed with spices. There is even an intriguing saltiness.

Sprinkle the spheres over a salad for some extra crunch and bursts of citrus juice. They can also be used to top freshly shucked oysters.

I make a gin and tonic with mine, crunching into the spheres as I sip the drink.

Know, though, that these are seasonal and will not be on sale for much longer. If you want a taste of them, don't delay.

**Pemberton Finger Limes, \$12.95 for a 60g pack from FairPrice Finest stores at Bukit Timah Plaza, Thomson Plaza, Junction 8, Marine Parade and Clementi Mall**



## Eating green

Just a few weeks ago, I wrote about dehydrated kale and asked when the fresh version would be easily available in supermarkets here.

I did not have to wait long. While doing a meal supermarket run recently, I find bunches of green kale, a member of the brassica family, in different shades, packed for salad.

This, and the other exotic greens that Chen Tan writes about in this week's Cheat Sheet on page 23, are going to make my meals a lot more interesting in the coming months.

The minute I get the kale home, I remove and discard the hard central stem from the curly leaves, shred what is left and sauté them with garlic and olive oil.

Then I squeeze in the juice of a lemon, add salt to taste and toss with cooked penne for a quick and fun-five dinner.

I relish every forkful of the fleshy, juicy leaves, which have just a tinge of bitterness.

The greens can also be used in vegetable soups and steams and baked to make kale chips. Just stem the kale and cut the leaves into smaller pieces, spray or toss lightly with olive oil, sprinkle on some salt and bake at 180 deg C for eight to 10 minutes, or until they dry out a bit and are crisp.

Now, seeing as how I seem to have gotten what I asked for, dare I hope for good, unusual factors? Kale sautéed with bacon is the bomb.

**Green kale, \$10.95 for a 400g bunch from Tanglin Market Place, B1-02 Tanglin Mall, tel: 6734-0308, open: 9am to 10pm daily**

## You say tomato

The tomato situation in Singapore keeps getting better, with new varieties and heirloom ones available in supermarkets and gourmet grocery shops. One day, good tomatoes will be commonplace, I hope.

Japanese ones have fascinated me since I had a perfect mountain tomato, chilled and dusted with a wasabi sesame dressing in a restaurant years ago.

I have enjoyed fruit tomatoes and micro ones the size of peas in sushi restaurants. So when I come across packets of plum-shaped ones, called, faintly enough, Slow Growth Japanese Tomatoes, I decide to get them.

All I do is cut them in half and then toss with olive oil, salt and pepper. They are delicious even just on their own too. Their sweetness, and that bit of a seamy ribe, is such a contrast to some pale, flaccid specimens which still lurk around in some shops.



Slow-growth sounds like a virtue but when I do some research, it turns up as a problem that frustrated gardeners vent on Internet forums.

Then I find something on a Japanese method of producing more fruit on a tree without using chemicals. It involves mildly injuring the branches of a plant so that energy spent on growing is redirected towards repairing the damage. Fewer leaves sprout but the plant produces more flowers, which then fruit.

There is no literature to say if this is the method used to grow these tomatoes. But doing things slow seems to bring out the best in these fruit.

**Slow Growth Mini Tomatoes, \$7.90 for a pack of about nine or 10 from Mandu-Ya Supermarket, B1-50 Liang Court, tel: 6329-1111, open: 10am to 10pm daily**

SoShiok

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