



LISA WHEELER

Proudly Norfolk

- C O L U M N -

BURNHAM'S BUTCHER

LISA WHEELER TELLS US ALL ABOUT HER ARTISAN FOOD COMPANY, **NORFOLK CHARCUTERIE**, AND ABOUT A CERTAIN PILE OF IRONING!

visit www.norfolkcharcuterie.co.uk

Who are you and what do you do?

I'm Lisa Wheeler and I'm a butcher, charcutier, full time mum to Herbie, 13, Henie, nine, and Dottie, one, and owner of the world's biggest ironing mountain!

Where are you based? I'm based in Burnham Thorpe. I moved to Norfolk three years ago from Nottinghamshire and this is the village that I want to grow old in.

What exactly do you produce? Local charcuterie with provenance. We produce a range of salamis and air dried meats, including air dried muntjac and seasonal flavours such as pork and date.

We use Holkham venison, which is less than a mile away. The pork comes from Tim Allen in South Creake (four miles away) and is slaughtered at a family-run abattoir in Gayton. The provenance of the meat is so important to us, not just morally but also for quality. All our herbs and spices are freshly ground on the day of production to guarantee maximum flavour.

How did you get started? I was lucky enough to be amongst the (2010) first year alumni at The School of Artisan Food, Welbeck, Nottinghamshire. I

trained intensively under the expert guidance of River Cottage butcher Ray Smith and his wife Mary. My major was butchery and charcuterie, with a minor in baking and patisserie. It was truly like being transported to the food lover's version of Narnia!

In addition to the practical skills, we also learnt so much about our food system, anthropology and worldwide food cultures. Being in that environment, surrounded by people so passionate, can't fail to inspire and quite frankly, it changed my life!

What did you do before you started your own business?

I was head of butchery at a local food hall and a freelance butcher (often helping out my good friends at the Fruit Pig Company). Having two older children, I worked around school times as much as I could but holidays were a guilt trip, so when I left my previous post on maternity leave, I decided to try and address the balance. Working from home gives me some flexibility around my family.

How long have you been going?

We set up 'The Meat Shed' in February 2016 but having Dottie in the June made it quite a slow starter! Sleepless nights and sharp knives are not an easy juggling act. Things are ticking along nicely now though, fitting in a few food fairs along with one long production day a week. Slicing, packing, etc then fits in around the new apprentice!

What or who inspires/inspired you?

Childhood memories, work experience, people I've met and travels have had a huge influence, but it's the amazing growers and producers that fuel it further. Just my weekly collection of venison from Holkham makes me want to expand my range and do the best I can with the incredible bounty Norfolk has to offer.

Where can we buy your products?

Bread Source, Upper St Giles, Norwich; Creake Abbey Farmer's Market, first Saturday of the month; Drove Orchards Farm Shop, Thornham; Holkham Hall Gift Shop, Wells-next-the-Sea; Rainbow Stores, East Rudham; The Market Bistro, King's Lynn; The Norfolk Deli, Hunstanton.

Have you got a best seller?

It's probably the Venison and Fennel Salami, perfect as antipasti or delicious fried and added to a goats' cheese salad and all of them are a great addition to a pizza!

Any future plans?

I'd love to help inspire the next generation and show how important provenance is, how important food is to us all; not just as fuel, but socially too. I'm also excited to be in the first wave of British charcuterie producers, an industry that I predict will thrive, just like British cheese, which is now a world contender.

What do you like doing in your spare time?

As my husband Tom manages a farm shop, there is always food involved. I do love it when family and friends come to visit as we get to share the magic of Norfolk with them.

How has Norfolk Food & Drink been able to support you?

I can't begin to tell you what an amazing support they have been. As a small producer, it can be hard going but NFD have been so supportive and helpful; often with a few words of encouragement at the right time. We're very lucky to have such support and all the NFD volunteers deserve massive thanks!



This column is supported by Norfolk Food & Drink and highlights its Proudly Norfolk members. For more details, visit www.norfolkfoodanddrink.com