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## Cochon555 - Chef Joseph Margate - Clink

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When *bad-boy-chef-turned-doting-dad-travel-show-host* Anthony Bourdain says the roast pig he had in the Philippines was "*the best ever*", that's saying something. Bourdain makes much of his legendary love of the pig.

So, never mind the other stellar chefs Margate is up against, the Philippine-born chef also has to live up to *THAT?* Talk about pressure. Something tells me our Cochon chef competitor is up to the challenge.



Chef Margate comes to [Clink at the Liberty Hotel](#) (formerly the Charles Street Jail) with a culinary rap sheet filled with stars: Traci des Jardins of Jardiniere in SF and John Sundstrom of Lark Restaurant in Seattle, among them.

But our story starts even further away than the West Coast. Chef Margate was born and raised in the Philippines. Will he feel pressure to *represent?*

When his father decided to move to the US, Chef Margate was 12 years old. As a child he loved food, but would not have predicted that this would be his calling. He recalls his Saturday morning ritual with his father was to go to the market and get the fresh pig's liver and sauté it with onions. Whole pigs would be brought to market and butchered there. "*When we roasted a whole pig, it was over charcoal fire and it was hand-cranked. I used to crank it!*" Yes chef, I

saw the Bourdain episode. Every mouthwatering minute.

From that childhood of good food, learning about close relationships with the butchers and farmers in the Saturday market, Margate evolved to culinary student (California Culinary Academy in San Francisco). Later, a series of restaurants and chefs deepened his love of fresh, local food prepared with a classic bent. James Beard award-winning chefs like Traci des Jardins (Jardinere), and Jonathan Sundstrom (Lark) both focused and refined his love for seasonal fresh foods. In between, at the W Hotel in Seattle, Margate focused on bringing all the best from Earth & Ocean (the name of the restaurant) to guests of the hotel and diners at the lounge and restaurant.

Helping Sundstrom open Lark and working for des Jardins seem to stand out in his recounting of the things that led him to his current position. He speaks with reverence about relationships that enable him to keep learning. Margate is a chef that respects what comes from the earth and ocean and reveres those that fish and grow to bring us the best ingredients. He knows the hard work that is required to grow and also to create dishes from these products.

Of course nothing can quite prepare one to drop into a busy, brand new kitchen only a few months after it opened, in the midst of the holiday season chaos. He says, in his quiet way, it *"took a few months to undo some things, many things."* One gets the sense he is finally relaxing into confidence in his kitchen, with his team, doing things his way, not the way the prior chef worked.

Sourcing locally has been, since his West Coast days, a very important value for Chef Margate. Where possible, he tries to continue to do so. Switching coasts has been another learning curve for him and he relishes the challenge and each new discovery. It may be hard for East Coasters to appreciate the beauty of something as common as a Nantucket Bay scallop, but when an experienced chef is filled with fresh excitement about this culinary gem, diners benefit.

He's particularly grateful to Specialty Foods purveyors who've introduced him to our regional bests. Realizing now how special it was to have the experience at Lark where the forager would show up with fresh mushrooms still caked with earth at the kitchen door.

For those of us who are food geeks, or food-obsessed, we are always a little tickled to discover something new. Chef Margate was the first to tell me about Spigarello which I then saw in some food blog or column. I shared my new discovery of black garlic and he told me they're growing lentils right here in Massachusetts! This searching, curious nature bodes well for diners of Margate's food.

He notes the difference in Heritage pigs from commercial and the variety from pig to pig. He was delighted to serve La Quercia Berkshire/black footed cross breed that was finished on acorns back in January. Making a three course tasting of it was a pleasure and "it had a clean fresh taste and was well-marbled and not at all gamey." He also noted the beautiful pastry that comes from using the leaf lard. If only we could convince someone to carry it around here...

Other than restaurant week, he's got a Berkshire pork loin on the menu he's serving with semolina gnocchi French violet mustard (grape must lends a faint sweetness and lavender tinge to the savory mustard) with Mizuna greens. That's one of his favorites on the menu.

He also makes a *furikake* fleur de sel and serves raw Nantucket Bay Scallops with that umami-rich salt and olive oil. Furikake is a Japanese condiment often sprinkled on rice dishes.

He's also a fan of local and farmstead cheeses. His cheese plate and accompaniments were noted in the second edition of the new cheese magazine, [Culture](#).

We're certainly glad Chef Margate's doing time here in Boston. Glad he's settled into his kitchen and found his neighborhood spot (Mike & Patty's - we agree! Who else had peameal bacon in Boston?)

Will his recent tenure neutralize any home-court advantage of hosting the Cochon event...? Something tells me, under his soft-spoken demeanor beats the heart of a competitor. Lookout boys!