



Parma Ham

The passion for an ancient job, consisting of ancient traditions, handed down from generation to generation; the care taken over the details at all curing and maturing stages; the balance of the fragrances and flavours of a rich and generous land; the quality of the raw material used and the attention given to choosing it. These are the elements that make Parma Ham one of the most representative products of the Made in Italy brand and one of the most highly prized and best known products in the world. Parma Ham is good, healthy and completely natural: Italian pork, the skill of master salters and the dry, gentle air of the hills. A few simple ingredients for an unmistakable sweetness and flavour.

The Consortium

The Parma Ham Consortium, an organisation of producers who use and safeguard the traditional processing method, was set up in 1963 to guarantee the consumer very high quality characteristics.

Since then, the Consortium ensures compliance with production specifications and is also involved in other activities that are essential for the protection and promotion of the product in Italy and throughout the world:

- ✓ **Management and safeguard of the production Regulations** were filed at the European Union for the Denomination of Protected Origin “Parma Ham”.
- ✓ **Management of the economic policy**
- ✓ **Protection of the denomination “Parma Ham” and of the relative brand (Ducal Crown) world-wide.**
- ✓ **Supervision concerning the correct observance of provisions laid down by law and by regulations**
- ✓ **Promoting and enhancing the product.**
- ✓ **Assistance to associated companies**

100% natural

Parma Ham is good, healthy and completely natural: the only ingredients are Italian pork cured with pure sea salt. Neither preservatives nor additives have ever been.

A PDO product

P.D.O. stands for “protected designation of origin” and refers to EEC Regulation n° 510/06.

These provisions recognize and define a product as indigenous to a certain region and country when its characteristics are essentially or exclusively dependent on its geographical and environmental origin.

More specifically: the term *Protected Designation of Origin* indicates products that are unequivocally linked to the geographical area whose name they bear and that meet two specific conditions: the production of the raw materials and their processing into the finished product must take place within the delimited region that gives its name to the product; the product’s quality or characteristics must be traceable to the geographical environment of its place of origin, which means the natural and human factors such as, for example, climate, soil quality and local technical knowledge.

The Quality System

There is a body of laws, laid down at European level and then implemented in the regulations of the individual countries, with which an attempt is made to create a true “quality system” regarding the particularly prized local products of the individual European countries, namely the high quality traditional products produced in particular geographical areas with special techniques that are part of the culture and history of the region. Parma Ham is one of these products that the European Union has decided to protect and promote by setting very precise rules regarding production, use of brands, checks, etc. For the purposes of EU protection, the protected designation of origin “Prosciutto di Parma” was registered on 12 June 1996.

The ten stages of sweetness

The Consortium was set up to guarantee the unmistakable sweetness of Parma Ham. In pursuit of this aim, it has imposed a precise method on the producing companies with full respect for tradition: Parma Ham must successfully pass all the production stages that end with a careful examination and subsequent fire “crowning” with the well known brand.

An essential condition for obtaining the “Prosciutto di Parma” designation is that the entire process takes place in an extremely limited area that includes the area of the province of Parma lying to the south of the via Emilia at a distance of at least 5 km from it, up to an altitude of 900 m, bounded to the east by the Enza river and to the west by the Stirone torrent. All the climatic conditions that are ideal for drying, namely the natural curing that will give sweetness and flavour to the Parma Ham, occur only in this area.

The air of the Parma hills is fragrant. Once it has picked up the aroma of the pine forests, the Versilia sea wind brushes against the karst mountains of the Cisa, where it loses all its salty taste, and finally rolls in the scent of the chestnut woods. It is therefore a dry air, ideal for curing “Prosciutti”.

This is how the true, sweet Parma Ham is produced.

Cutting

The pig that is to become “Parma Ham” must have precise characteristics with regard to the area of origin, 10 regions in central northern Italy, and the breed. Only when these requirements are met, as certified by the documentation and by the tattoo put on by the farmer, can the pig be sent for slaughter, provided it is over 9 months old; weighing on average 160 kg (and in any case not less than 144 kg); healthy and has not eaten for 15 hours. Then the fresh leg is separated from the side.

Cooling

The fresh leg is left for 24 hours in cooling rooms until it reaches a temperature of 0°C so that the meat will become firmer with the cold and can be trimmed more easily. During the cooling process, the product undergoes an initial drop in weight of about 1%. Except for refrigeration, the legs used for Parma Ham production must not undergo any preservation treatment, including freezing.

Trimming

Through trimming some fat and skin are removed to give the ham its typical round “chicken leg” shape. The trimming is carried out for two reasons: one is aesthetic and the other is technical as it helps the following salting phase. During this phase legs with even the smallest faults are discarded. With trimming, the leg loses 24% of its weight in fat and muscle.

Salting

The cooled and trimmed legs are sent from the slaughterhouses to the curing houses. The salting is carried out using both humid and dry salt: the pigskin is covered with humid salt, while the muscular parts are covered with dry salt. It is important at this stage that the legs

have an adequate and uniform temperature, as a leg that is too cold doesn't absorb enough salt, whereas a leg that is not cold enough may deteriorate.

Legs are then put in a cold store at a temperature ranging from 1°C to 4°C, with a humidity level of approximately 80%. Legs stay in this store called "first salt" for six to seven days; they are then taken out, residual salt is removed and they are covered again with a thin coat of salt. Finally they are put in another cold store called "second salt", where they stay for 15 to 18 days, according to their weight. During this period the leg slowly assimilates the salt and loses some humidity. At the end of the salting phase the weight loss is approximately 4%.

Salt is the only preservative used in the production method, no chemical elements are allowed.

Rest

After removing the residual salt, the legs are put in the rest store for 60 to 80 days with a humidity level of about 75% and at a temperature ranging from 1°C to 5°C. These stores are often aired. During this phase the ham has to "breathe" without becoming either too wet or too dry and the assimilated salt penetrates deeply and distributes uniformly inside the muscular mass. The weight loss during the rest phase amounts to approximately 8% - 10%.

Washing and drying

The legs are washed with warm water to eliminate excess salt and impurities. During sunny, dry and airy days the drying of the legs is carried out in natural conditions. In winter, cold, wet or humid conditions special dryers are used. This process lasts approximately one week.

Pre-curing

The pre-curing phase is carried out in large rooms with windows on either side, where hams are hung on special wood frames called "scalere". The airflow regulation is very important: windows are opened with regard to the ratios of internal / external humidity and internal humidity / product humidity. This allows for a constant and gradual drying of the hams. This phase lasts about 3 months.

Weight loss during this phase amounts to about 8% - 10%.

Greasing

The greasing softens the superficial muscular layers to prevent the external layers drying too rapidly. The cavity around the bare part of the bone, the uncovered muscular mass and possible chaps are covered a mixture of lard, salt and pepper and sometimes ground rice.

It also allows further humidity loss.

Curing

In the seventh month, the ham is transferred to the “cellars”, rooms with less air and light where the sounding, an essential phase in the “ham life”, is carried out.

During the seasoning, important biochemical and enzymatic processes occur which determine the typical Parma Ham flavour, perfume and taste and the easy digestibility. The weight loss during the curing is about 5%.

Branding

At the end of the ageing period, which is a minimum of 12 months, a horse bone needle, which rapidly absorbs the product fragrances, is inserted in different parts of the ham and smelt by experts who can verify the development of the production process.

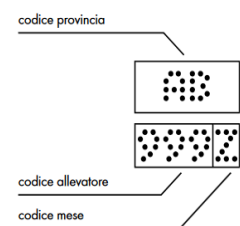
Only then are the hams ready for the official stamp of certification: the firebranding with the Ducal Crown. Since the fire branding is the final guarantee that all the processing stages have been carried out correctly, the officers of the independent certifying body, the Istituto Parma Qualità (I.P.Q.) arrive. The officers check the ageing period from the registers and the seal on the ham and they ensure that the hams have conformed to all the processing procedures.

Guaranteed quality

The name “Parma Ham” is exclusively reserved for hams bearing the Ducal Crown, the indelible and unique brand given at the end of the ageing period.

The final branding, however, is only the last step of a long identification process that leaves on the ham, at every step, the “signature” of each operator.

It begins with the breeder who puts a special tattoo on both legs of the young pig. This shows the breeder’s identification code and a code indicating the month of the animal’s birth.



PP
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sigla di identificazione del macello

It continues with the slaughterhouse where every fresh trimmed leg is checked and branded with a mark permanently identifying it. The mark has the initials *PP* – *Prosciutto di Parma* and the slaughterhouse identification.

Next there is the metal seal made up of a circular crown showing the *C.P.P.* - *Consorzio Prosciutto di Parma* initials and the date curing began.



mese e anno di inizio lavorazione



sigla di identificazione aziendale

Finally, the five-point Ducal Crown brand is stamped under a strict control and is the final guarantee of the quality of the ham. The Ducal Crown also shows the identification code of the producer.

The Ducal Crown has a high value due to its dual function of identification and qualification: it identifies the product from all other hams, and assures its authenticity; it guarantees the envisaged production procedure at all stages. The crown mark is what makes the true Parma Ham recognizable to consumers.

Nutritional Values

Parma Ham: a concentrate of excellence and health for a healthy, balanced diet.

In a research to update the nutritional values carried out by the Parma Ham Consortium in agreement with the *Stazione Sperimentale per l'Industria delle Conserve Alimentari (SSICA)* (Experimental Station for the Preserves Industry) and the *Istituto Nazionale di Ricerca per gli Alimenti e la Nutrizione (INRAN)* (National Food and Nutrition Research Institute), the analyses on Parma Ham indicate a balanced combination of very high quality **organoleptic and sensorial characteristics** and **nutritional properties** that make it a food suitable for everyone.

The values refer to a medium cured product and certify the extreme naturalness of Parma Ham, a product that does not contain preservatives, nor the additives generally used in the preparation of meat based foods; a product that combines a great palatability and its unmistakable and famous sweetness with a high nutritional value.

In particular, Parma Ham proves to be a highly digestible product and therefore the ideal food for children, sportsmen, sportswomen and the elderly, thanks to its content of excellent quality proteins and to the natural proteolysis that takes place during curing (the breakdown of the **proteins** into smaller molecules and into individual amino acids).

Sportsmen and sportswomen can also count on the detoxifying and anti-fatigue action of branched amino acids – valine, leucine and isoleucine – that make up more than 20% of the total amount of protein and contribute to the repair of muscle damage due to the wear that the muscle sustains during movement.

The total **lipid component** is also of good quality, thanks to the high content of unsaturated fatty acids (64.9%), the good fats that are good for health, such as oleic acid (45.8%), a monounsaturated fat, also contained in olive oil, that protects from cardiovascular pathologies.

Eating Parma Ham means contributing to achieving the recommended daily amounts (RDAs) of **group B vitamins**, and also to providing a good amount of precious minerals that are highly bioavailable, meaning they are easy for the body to absorb, such as iron for example.

Parma Ham also proves to be an excellent food that helps to combat and inhibit the action of free radicals, the main cause of aging and degenerative diseases, and to restore the physiological balance of the body, thanks to the presence of **natural antioxidants** such as vitamin E and selenium. The recent analyses have also highlighted the presence of carnosine and anserine: there is a good amount of the first in muscle tissue, for which it controls some metabolic processes for energy production; the other is a substance that is naturally present in muscles and takes part in the antioxidant action performed by carnosine.