



*Simply Flavors Collection is happy to introduce
“The Prosciutto Pio Tosini” Top quality in Langhirano Parma.*

Prosciutto Pio Tosini

“Pio Tosini” the Artisanal Prosciutto from Langhirano -Parma-

Pio Tosini is one of the most sought-after brands of Prosciutto di Parma. The Tosini family have been making Prosciutto di Parma since 1905 and still take exceptional care through every step of the process. The second salting of the legs is done completely by hand by the in-house ‘salting master’, using finely ground sea salt. Each leg is cured in a hall built in the 1950s on an east-west trajectory so as to capture the breeze that blows from the mountains down to the plains. No air conditioning is used and the windows are opened on a controlled basis to allow the legs to cure naturally. All final trimming, deboning and packaging is done in-house to guarantee the final product is of the highest quality. Matured for 24 months, the flavour is deep and rich – the perfect balance between salt and the natural sweetness of the meat.

Giovanni Bianchi family of the prosciutto curing house, “Pio Tosini” has been curing prosciutto in the Parma region of Italy since 1905 and today, Giovanni, along with one of his cousins and an uncle, continue the family business.

Langhirano, where Pio Tosini is located, is a town in the heart of the Parma region. Of the roughly 160 producers of Parma prosciutto, approximately 100 of them are located somewhere in or around Langhirano. Langhirano has an excellent microclimate for curing – it is dry and not too foggy in the winter.



Giovanni Bianchi of Pio Tosini

Founded by Giovanni’s grandfather, Ferrante Tosini, the company is actually named after Ferrante’s son, Pio, who began helping with the business after World War I. Pio Tosini has always been based in Langhirano but they moved to their current premises in 1952, beginning with a large brick building that still serves as the final curing space for the hams.

The brick buildings looked sharp and were in excellent condition, the grounds were spotless and well maintained and the company's elegant acorn emblem graced a number of the buildings. This foreshadowed what was to come. The interior of the buildings were just as organized and meticulously clean. The overall impression was one of care and attention to detail.

Part of the reason that Pio Tosini's Prosciutto di Parma is more expensive than some of the others parma Prosciutto is that they pay extra to the slaughtering houses so that they have a right of refusal. If they don't like a leg – it doesn't have ample fat, the quality of the fat is not up to snuff, the leg is not heavy enough or the skin color isn't good – it goes back to the slaughterhouse. Giovanni and/or his cousin are often involved in this process themselves and they always have at least two of the most experienced staff members overseeing the inspection.

Prosciutto di Parma is a DOP product – this means that in order to receive that name, the prosciutto must come from a specified geographic area (in this case, Parma) and must be made in adherence to certain guidelines of preparation and sourcing. Hams that can be considered for the Prosciutto di Parma designation must be a hind leg of a pig that is raised in one of 15 out of the 20 Italian regions. The pigs generally weigh between 180-200 kilograms (as compared to 100-120 kilograms for the pigs used to make jamón Serrano) and most of the pigs actually come from the Po Valley area – Reggio, Cremona, Emilia and so forth.



As the legs are being received, they are given some further trimming, are weighed, branded with the Pio Tosini insignia and receive a metal tag that bears the initials "CPP" (this stands for Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma) and the month/year that the leg was received. This tagging of information is in addition to some that is already on each leg – a tattoo that tells which farm the pig came from and a firebrand that indicates which slaughterhouse it passed through.



Once the legs are received, they are given the first of two saltings. The first salting is applied to the entirety of the ham. This occurs on a Friday and then the legs rest in a large, refrigerated room for 5 days. The day we visited, a Wednesday, the hams were receiving their second salting. First, they are wheeled out of their refrigerated chamber and pass through a machine that massages out any remaining blood. Someone then manually presses out the very last drop in each ham before it passes on to the second salting.

The second salting is the most important of the two. This time the salt is applied solely to the exposed muscle and fat at the large end of the ham. Salt applied there is the only salt that actually permeates the ham and cures it. The salt from the first salting helps give a nice color to the leg and kills any miscreant bacteria on the skin. The second salting is entirely done by either of two *mastro salatores* at Pio Tosini. The position of *mastro salatore* is one of, if not the most important role at Pio Tosini. These “master salters” do something no machine can do – they look at each leg and know where exactly to apply the salt in order to achieve the best possible cure. Computers help them know the percentage of salt they are applying in relation to the weight of the ham but there is no substitute for the experience both by eye and by feel that these men have in terms of judging where and how much salt to apply.

The salt that is used is natural, dry sea salt from southern Italy. A company local to Langhirano buys and processes it specifically for use in the curing process, maintaining a grain size and shape that allows for even curing. At this point, the quantity and quality of the fat (inspected so closely in the receiving process) is instrumental in ensuring an even distribution of the salt in the curing process.



After the second salting, the hams rest in a cool, temperature and humidity controlled room for 19 days. Then, after a total of 24 days from arrival, the salt has been sufficiently absorbed into the ham to make it ready for hanging. At this juncture, the legs are hung in a room ranging in temperature from 1 – 3.5°C until they are three months old. After about 60 days from their arrival at Pio Tosini, the hams will already have begun to shrink sufficiently that it is necessary to trim one of the leg bones that begins to protrude.

From this refrigeration unit, the hams are then moved to a slightly more humid room that ranges in temperature from 1-4.5°C. This part of the process mimics the winter time that the hams would have endured in the days before refrigeration and when curers were dependent on seasonal fluctuations in temperature to work their magic.

The next step in the process is carried out after the salt has fully permeated the muscle of each ham. The legs are washed with hot water to remove a white coating that forms as result of the salt application. After the washing, the hams are hung in a large “pre-curing” room that is cooled only with air conditioning.

When the hams are moved to the final curing hall (it is far too large to call it a room), a lard mixture is applied to the exposed muscle of the ham. A combination of lard, rice flour, salt and pepper, it helps keep the meat tender. This building, the original one built by Giovanni’s grandfather in 1952, is laid out on an east-west trajectory so as to capture the breeze that blows from the mountains down to the plains. The building is also set up off the ground more than usual to allow for air to circulate underneath the curing hall. No air conditioning is used and the windows are opened on a controlled basis to allow the hams to cure naturally. As the hams age, they progress down the hall so they are always organized on a chronological basis.

In this final stage, the hams often develop a slight fuzz or growth which is called “rufino,” a natural microorganism that grows on prosciutto, much like mold does on cheese in a good cave. Genuine Prosciutto

di Parma must be cured for a minimum of 400 days. Pio Tosini cures their legs for a minimum of 500 days, allowing extra time on the bone and extra time for flavor development.

The final step is testing by the prosciutto consortium and it's done in a very unique and traditional way. Testers use sharp pieces of horse bone and insert the bone into five spots on a given prosciutto, smelling the bone quickly after each insertion. They can detect a bad or inferior ham by smell. Why the horse bone? Turns out, horse bones are very porous and so they capture odors very quickly, while also releasing that same odor equally quickly. This means that the testers can capture their smells in rapid succession without having to wait long for the scent of one test to dissipate before moving onto the next. And, the rationale for the five spots? Each spot is near a major vein and it is these spots where it is most likely that any faults will show.

At this stage in the curing process, if blood were left in the ham, it would smell funny. The consortium does random testing so not every ham is tested – Giovanni indicated that roughly 20% of a given batch will be examined and this testing is done when the hams are one year in age. It is only after the legs have passed this test that they can officially be called Prosciutto di Parma.



At Pio Tosini, unlike other prosciutto curers, they do the subsequent trimming and packaging in house. Most other producers send their hams out for deboning but Giovanni prefer to do it themselves in order to have greater quality control. Pio Tosini trim their prosciutto a little bit differently than other curing houses – essentially making it friendlier to the monger, waiter or butcher who ends up slicing the ham by setting it up so that they have to do little trimming after opening it, incurring less waste.

After they are trimmed, the side of each leg gets sewn up (this helps us keep the ham together in one piece when we have it on the slicer). The ham is then pressed into shape.

