

TOKACHI HILLS

*When dreams  
come true!*

ROYAL MANGALICAS

IN JAPAN



*Wilhelm W. Kohl*

&

*Barbara Meyer zu Altenschildesche*





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## - TOKACHI HILLS & VIKTOR MOLDOVAN -

*Tokachi Hills is one of these magic places very few people outside Japan have ever heard of, but when it comes to the Mangalitsa story, it has its own very special place. It is the story not just about Tokachi Hills, but about the two very special people who have given the place its spirit, the hard work associated with it, and the success that it has become.*

Viktor Mondovan, the Hungarian chef, residing in Japan now for more than 10 years, always points out quickly that his story is a complicated one, based mostly on chance and hard work.

Yes, he obviously is Hungarian, and a lot of his work is based on working with the Mangalitsa pig. But it is not a romantic love story; it does not start with sighting a herd of Mangalitsas in the hot sun of the Hungarian Puszta, and setting off to Japan to bring this delicious pork to the island nation.

Actually, Viktor had never seen a live Mangalitsa when he took his new job at the Hungarian Embassy in Tokyo, and it took him several years and a lot of experimenting to understand the tremendous potential present in the meat and fat of the pig. He had come to Tokyo about the same time the Pick Szeged Company, the largest processor and marketer of Mangalitsa meat in the world, started its marketing effort in Japan.





*As* the Mangalitsa is looked upon as a “Hungaricum”, meaning a unique Hungarian product, it of course was only logical to approach the chef at the embassy to cooperate in this effort – and Viktor certainly did. Without having had any training in working with that kind of pork, he set out to become one of the most creative and technically superior experts. It was the biggest challenge of his life, and a huge success.



Viktor was in Holland during February of 2015, working for a few weeks at “Boreas”, a 2-Star Michelin restaurant, to further his skills. He had been planning on a Mangalitsa dinner for the Dutch Culinary press, organized by Barbara Meyer zu Altenschildesche at the “Basiliek” in Harderwijk, another Michelin starred restaurant.

The dinner turned out to be fantastic, with great press as a result. But Viktor nearly missed his plane on his way back to Hungary the next day for the baptism of his third child. (Lucky for him, he did make it to Aron’s baptism)







*Little  
pieces of  
heaven!*





*F*lying in from Hokkaido to attend the dinner at Basilek gave Viktor's boss, Issho Kajiwara, Managing Director of Tokachi Hills resort, a chance to see his first live Mangalitsas as well.

The two of them had met a few years earlier through a mutual acquaintance, and the meeting had resulted in a job offer for Viktor to become the chef at Tokachi Hills. As in many cases, the early days there were hard for Viktor to produce much more than the daily food requirements, but eventually the restaurant was going well enough that they decided that the few cuts the Pick Szeged Company sells in Japan were not enough for a full program.

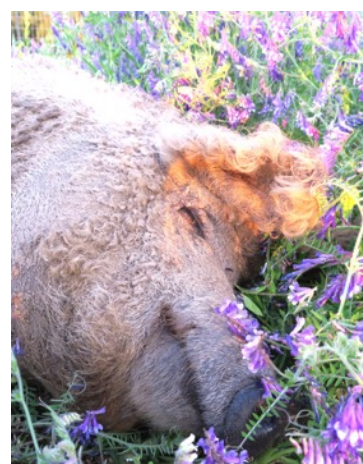






*I* have never met Viktor, but I met Issho in August 2015 when he came to visit my farm in Haslett, and I believe the day he spent with Barbara and me, looking at the happily grazing Mangalitsas, greatly contributed to the final decision to establish the Tokachi Hills Mangalitsa farm. Issho had been impressed with the free-range setting and happy, very friendly pigs in the pastures, exactly what he had in mind for his own farm.

Since Viktor had produced his own Hungarian style sausages, bacon and hams, all that was needed were the pigs, and the incredible lard they produce. There simply is no substitute for it, and nobody who has ever eaten Mangalitsa lardo will disagree. Unfortunately, long negotiations with Peter Toth and the MOE (Hungarian Mangalitsa Breeders), lasting nearly 2 years, had not resulted in the sale of any pigs for export to Japan, and I can only imagine the level of frustration Issho and Viktor must have experienced.



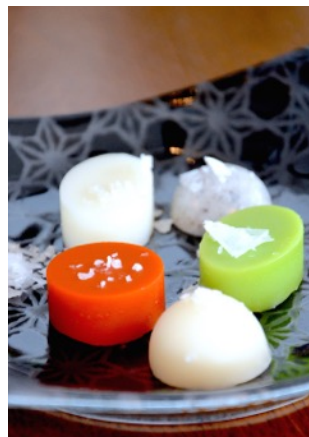
*Mangalitsas - you meet them - you love them!*





*Their* whole project, their dream to introduce more of the Hungarian gastronomy, offer not only Mangalitsa pork, but allow their nearly 80,000 visitors a year from all over Asia to actually see the pigs that produce this tasty pork, was in danger. They had wanted to establish a complete farm-to-table supply system, with all home-made products, not just fruit and vegetables, but also the most important part, the Mangalitsa pig itself.

After one last failed attempt to strike a deal with the MOE, Issho and Viktor decided that all their efforts, years of hard work and vision for Tokachi Hills would not die because of Hungarian intransigence. When Issho visited Holland for his chef's dinner, he had a chance to spend time with Barbara, looking at



different farms, learning more about her way to ethically treat her pigs. He saw his first live Mangalitsa pig at Barbara's beautiful place in Leuvenum during that time, and only a few month later visited Kohl Farms in Michigan to get a better idea about her work in the USA.







*“Curly  
pig  
beauties”*





Approached by Issho for the second time, Barbara, already preparing another export to the USA at the time, quickly agreed to not only put together a substantial herd for export from the Netherlands to Japan, but to act as a consultant and help establish the breeding program. It was a monumental effort to comply with all the Japanese health and quarantine requirements, but it was a joyous day on July 4, 2016, when 25 Mangalitsa breeding pigs took off in Amsterdam on the long flight to Tokyo. All 3 different colors of Mangalitsas were on the flight, and every one of them arrived safely.



One can only imagine how Viktor, Issho & Barbara must have felt when they unloaded the pigs together in Hokkaido three weeks later. According to Viktor, that day was the real beginning of the Mangalitsa story in Japan, that day they joined the “Royal Mangalitsa Breeding Family”. Barbara spent a total of three weeks in Hokkaido, training the field staff, advising on feeding, husbandry, fencing and shelters, and, of course, photographed the beautiful pictures you can see here.





*Come taste Viktor's creations from the Royal Tokachi Mangalitsa pork!*





*A*ccording to Viktor, his role in Japan is like the introduction to a book. The first litters ever of Mangalitsa pigs in Asia have been born at Tokachi Hills in the meantime. From July 2016 on, all visitors finally enjoyed a personal look at the pig that had such a lengthy and challenging journey. Viktor can now offer many more of his unique, unfussy and clean tasting Mangalitsa dishes, work his magic with the creamy fat, introduce even more customers to this incredible pork.

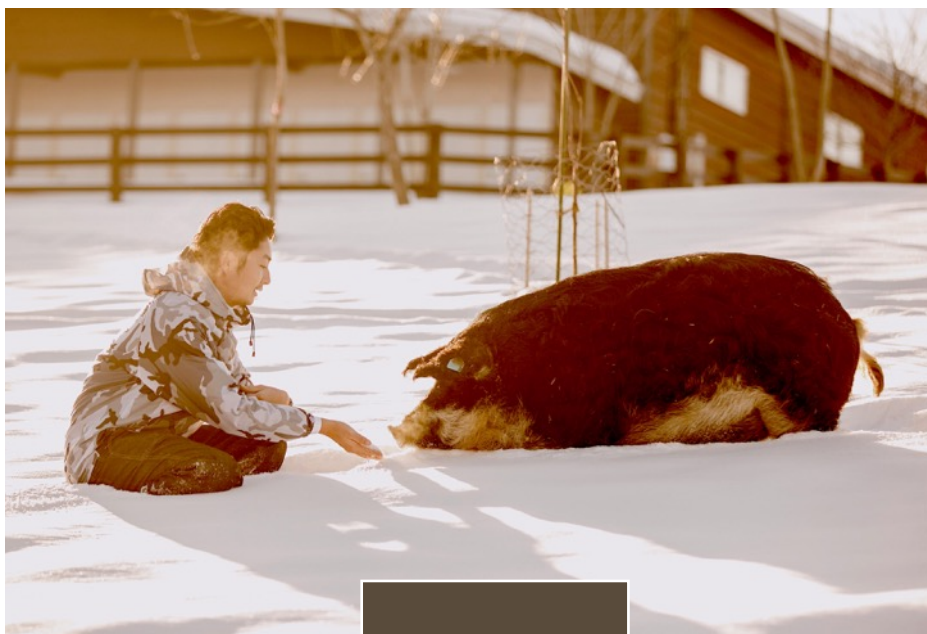
How many photographs of the pigs will be taken by lucky visitors in these coming years, in addition to pictures of the food creations they will be served? Will the photos be main courses, or the incredible pastries Viktor makes with the lard?

Either way, a little bit of European cooking from the kitchen of one of the most creative and experienced chefs in Japan, Hungarian by birth, Mangalitsa lover by avocation, will certainly add to the excitement of visiting Hokkaido and Tokachi Hills.

The future for the Mangalitsa in Japan looks very bright; lots of piglets have been born, and the possibility for a “Japanese Mangalitsa Breeders Association” is being discussed. Additional breeding stock has arrived in Japan, and the interest in Mangalitsa pork continuous to grow. There even is a cartoon about the Mangalitsa breed.



Viktor Moldovan and his culinary expertise, blending European and Japanese style cooking into an incredible offering of new dishes, of course will be prominently featured in Barbara’s and my forthcoming stories. Many chefs around the world will glean new ideas for their own kitchens, and maybe some of them will even go to work with Viktor at Tokachi Hills in the years to come.



*"Establishing  
a true  
connection."*





*Issho Kajiware & Viktor Moldovan*

TOKACHI HILLS

TOKACHI ROYAL MANGALICA



*Royal Mangalitsa*

216 E SHOESMITH RD, HASLETT, MI 48840 - USA

*Pictures: Royal Mangalitsa, Tokachi Hills & Anke Rijksen*

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