March 2016

Neopol Savory Smokery – Smoked Goodness at the Market

The beauty of a farmers' market is that the produce is local. It's not unusual to buy fruits and vegetables that were still in the ground or on a tree 24 hours ago. Sometimes, though, a vendor carries a product that cannot be sourced locally, and it's so incredibly good that we welcome them with open arms and shopping baskets.

Neopol Savory Smokery is that vendor. Each Saturday morning they sell out of their expertly smoked salmon, smoked salmon salad, whitefish, mussels, hummus (yes, they smoke their chickpeas) tofu and chicken, sustainably sourced from all over the world. Salmon, Neopol's signature product, comes directly from a coastal inlet in Scotland's North Highland from a salmon farm that is nearly three miles long and part of the salmon's natural migratory track.

Barbara Lahnstein, a German immigrant who founded Neopol 20 years ago, chose this salmon farm because of its sustainable practices, and uses the same standards to select the greenback mussels from New Zealand, rainbow trout from North Carolina, shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico and local chicken and eggs from farms in northern Baltimore County.

"She travels far and wide to find really sustainable producers," Andy Karnes told me. A part-time art professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Karnes began working at their Old Town Farmer's Market stand about a year ago, as a favor to his friend and Barbara's son Dorian.

Procuring world-class ingredients is half of the equation to their success. The other half lies in their smoking technique. The fish, chicken and other foods are hot smoked, meaning that they are cooked while they are placed on a smoking rack in a smoker for 8-10 hours with cherry, apple and peach wood. As they cook they absorb the smoked flavor of the fruitwoods.

With its origins at the Belvedere Square Market in Baltimore, Neopol arrived at the Old Town Farmer's Market about 18 months ago and already has a following of regulars who stop and shop with them faithfully each Saturday. The smoked salmon salad and salmon filets are the top sellers (and delicious. Yes, I took home a few samples).