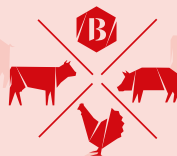




Artisan fine meats
from Belgium



www.artisanfinemeats.be



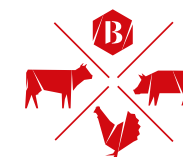
Dear Meat Lover,
Welcome to the world of Belgian high-quality meat products!

Together with Belgian beers, Belgian chocolate and the legendary Belgian cyclists, these products fit perfectly in the list of specialties of which Belgians are proud, and rightly so. Not only do they comply with the most stringent quality standards, but they are also part of a wide range of meat products. Thanks to the many local butchers, who continue to cultivate their local flavours, the producers of high-quality Belgian meat products will always be able to offer you a product, which perfectly meets the requirements of your customers.

Should you still have a specific requirement for an unusual flavour or packaging, we will happily search for an answer for you. Finding solutions and innovating is part of being Belgian. Very often, our roots are in the independent expert enterprises, who also passed on their authenticity to us and passion for a product full of flavour. And that is something your customers can taste!

Enjoy,

The Belgian meat products suppliers



www.artisanfinemeats.be

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In Belgium, craftsmanship and innovation start at school. Belgian butchery schools not only teach their students the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge but also let them develop their own charcuterie.



**“Our food safety procedures are
one of the strictest in Europe.”**

Anneleen Vandewynckel, Fenavian Director.



We can say, without a shadow of a doubt, that Belgian meat products are of the highest quality, that Belgian control methods are of the strictest in Europe and that products are made with the utmost compliance with food safety. We produce authentic meat products with craftsmanship that has been handed down over hundreds of years.

QUALITY

Quality is a permanent fixture for Belgian meat processing companies. That quality not only concerns raw materials and finished products but also product control, management, flexibility, sustainability and food safety. This started over 2,000 years ago. Even then, the Romans took Belgian dry salted ham home. Then, people in the area that is now Belgium, were some of the first in Europe to cure meat. So this is a tradition that has been practised for centuries and which is currently characterised by a very wide and varied range of products and companies, targeting both the local markets and those abroad. Fenavian, the National Federation of Meat Products Manufacturers (www.fenavian.be), supports all its members in guaranteeing the highest possible quality.

**Belgian meat products are
some of the best in the world**

Quality, craftsmanship and a rich history.



Authentic recipes handed down from generation to generation

Beer and chocolate remain Belgium's most important exports. Quality, craftsmanship and a rich history are all responsible for their success. The history of our charcuterie stretches back even further. Its range of products is very varied, authentic and of high quality. Everywhere you go in Belgium, you're bound to find a wide variety of local meat products made with care and craftsmanship. Our butchers pass down their authentic recipes from generation to generation. Most of Belgium's meat product manufacturers have evolved from artisanal butcher families and will often still use those original recipes from their forefathers, with their authentic flavours. They grew up with the family craft and most of all, professional pride.

The very best raw materials

"Belgian meat product manufacturers are very hard workers but shy, and sometimes too shy, about the quality of their products", according to **Anneleen Vandewynckel** and **Louis-Philippe Michielssen**, Director and Chairman respectively of Fenavian. "We don't talk enough about how unique and how good we are. The quality of our products is the starting point which remains a permanent fixture in the whole production

procedure. We process the very best fresh raw materials. The Belgian Landrace pig and our Belgian Blue are renowned for their high quality lean meat and full taste. But we are also developing new pig breeds, such as the Menapii pig, a predecessor of the Gallic pigs the Romans liked so much and with which we are trying to revive a 2,000-year-old tradition."

Safe, sustainable and flexible

Every step in the production process is monitored with a quality control procedure. Anneleen Vandewynckel: "Our food safety procedure is one of the strictest in Europe. Our meat product manufacturers also pay a lot of attention to sustainability, both socially and in terms of production. Our companies invest in wastewater treatment, heat recuperation of their coolers, solar panels..." It is the only way to guarantee buyers of Belgian meat products that they not only receive high-quality products compliant with food safety regulations, but also that the carbon footprint has been kept to an absolute minimum.

Another strength of Belgian producers is their flexibility. Louis-Philippe Michielssen: "Our meat product manufacturers process pork, beef, horse meat, lamb, poultry and game in a wide variety of products. Belgian meat product companies



*Louis-Philippe Michielssen and Anneleen Vandewynckel,
Chairman and Director of Fenavian.*


are the ultimate niche players. They are experts in developing specific products and flavours and can quickly and flexibly respond to the customers' requirements, both at home and abroad."

Scientifically founded innovations

Belgian meat product manufacturers have the necessary know-how and expertise to meet all of their customers' requirements. They also receive support from many research centres. "We have an exceptional scientific team consisting of researchers from many universities both here and abroad", Anneleen Vandewynckel tells us. "We also have projects with the universities of Maastricht (The Netherlands), Reading (United Kingdom) and the Experimental Station for the

Food Preserving Industry (Stazione Sperimentale per l'Industria delle Conserve Alimentari – SSICA) in Parma (Italy). That way, we can scientifically support every innovation and together with butchery schools can develop new culinary opportunities for our products and motivate our young butchers of the future. Together with our companies, we are in close contact with all farmers' organisations both in Belgium and abroad, animal feed companies, slaughterhouses and the retail industry. The chain interaction enables us to respond quickly and accurately to new innovation methods and applications."

Reliable

Louis-Philippe Michielssen concludes: "A Belgian partner is a very reliable partner. Our companies have a reputation stretching back several decades, even more than 100 years in some cases. They are reliable not only in terms of permanent high-quality products, but also in terms of finances and logistics. That reliability offers guarantees for any customer, be they large or small, whom they work with." 

www.fenavian.be

Fenavian vzw – Belgian Federation of Meat Products
Wetenschapsstraat 14 – BE-1040 Brussels
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“Everywhere you go in Belgium, you’re bound to find a large variety of local meat products, made with great care and craftsmanship.”

Louis-Philippe Michielssen, Fenavian President.



Food safety is a tradition in Belgium. The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) was established in 2002 and focuses solely on food safety, including traceability and self-regulation. A centrally-managed control program checks all manufacturers of high-quality meat products and their suppliers, and that is unique! However, it gives all buyers of these products and all consumers a guarantee of safe, high-quality meat products.

FOOD SAFETY

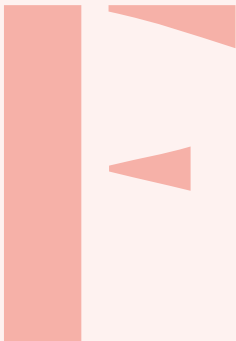


“Not only the high-quality meat product manufacturers must comply with the regulations and legislation, but also their suppliers.”

Herman Diricks, FASFC Managing Director.

Herman Diricks, FASFC Managing Director

Additional guarantees for safe artisan fine meats using The Belgian Approach.



“FASFC is one of the few agencies with the sole task of monitoring a country’s food safety,” according to **Herman Diricks**, the agency’s Managing Director. “We are not authorised for anything else, contrary to what often occurs in other countries. The advantage is that we can coherently monitor the entire food chain, from farm to sandwich, checking each individual link and the chain as a whole.” Our self-regulation gives Belgian food safety an extra trump: we are the only country where manufacturers of high-quality meat products and their suppliers can have their self-regulation system checked by self-regulation guides at an accredited certification organisation. That gives their customers and thus consumers additional guarantees in terms of compliance with food safety and legislation.

Traceability and food safety

“Self-regulation and guides also exist in other countries, but only Belgium provides the opportunity to have your self-regulation system audited and certified externally. This system guarantees that all players in the chain follow the food safety legislation to the letter,” explains Diricks. “That is how traceability and food safety go hand in hand. All links in the chain are of equal importance and are monitored with equal scrutiny. We approach food safety in three ways: check-ups at the manufacturers’ by FASFC employees,

self-regulation by those manufacturers and audits by third parties, the certification organisations.” Registration and monitoring of non-compliance within self-regulation is crucial. Simply put, it determines the system’s performance.

FASFC also monitors traceability by regularly organising exercises involving several links in the chain. That enables us always to be ready for any crisis and always to be on the ball. By now, this consistent approach is internationally known as ‘the Belgian approach’.

Guides and checklists for each activity

Diricks stresses the importance of self-regulation within companies. “The reason we make so many tools available is to allow self-regulation run smoothly. Checklists are available for companies so they can check traceability across company borders. There is a guide for nearly every activity in the high-quality meat product chain and we strictly monitor that these are applied and complied with not just by manufacturers but also by their suppliers. Whether a company manufactures or transports animal feed, breeds, transports, butchers or cuts animals or turns them into high-quality meat products, every link must strictly comply with food safety legislation. Moreover, we also verify whether traceability works perfectly across the whole system.”

Trust and appreciation

Belgium and the FASFC are often praised for their ‘good practice in food safety’, due to their expertise and the coherent system. “If a company in the high-quality meat products manufacturing chain is certified, then that must also be a quality label for the food safety of that product,” says Diricks. “Other countries and stakeholders know that. Our approach is highly valued and creates trust. When we certify a company for their food safety, we ensure that other countries consider that to be a sufficient guarantee to follow in our footsteps. That is a sign that our approach is respected at an international level.”

Integrated in international standards

In order for companies in the high-quality meat products chain to operate correctly, it is important for all requirements and systems to be integrated and aligned. For that reason, the FASFC self-regulation guides can be combined with international standards such as ISO22000, GlobalGAP, BRC, IFS, etc. “However, these standards have a broad horizontal scope, and our system has a clear vertical focus: compliance with all regulations and legislation in terms of food safety. When combined with the international standards, this creates the best system.”

No concessions on food safety

Companies in the food industry face constantly decreasing margins, so isn’t food safety too costly in these circumstances? The FASFC Managing Director couldn’t be clearer: “Food safety will always be a chargeable expense, no matter how small the margins. The size of the margins will never influence my co-workers. Rules regarding food safety, self-regulation and traceability must always be complied with by all links in the chain. We owe it to our consumers. These rules are an extra asset as we see that a high level of food safety goes hand in hand with high quality.”

The Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain has been guaranteeing food safety and food quality in Belgium since 2002. International website: www.favv.be/home-en/



“Thanks to our high quality in terms of raw materials, production, knowledge and food safety productions, we are one of the best producers in Europe.”

Wim De Cock, COO Ter Beke.



Belgium is a country with highly diverse regional flavours. Each region has its own charcuterie. The strength of our companies is in their ability to respond to all these different flavours and recipes. Flexibility is an essential part of their DNA. They are happy listen to buyers from grocery stores and supermarket chains so they can meet their requirements.

FLEXIBILITY & PRODUCT RANGE

Nearly all our meat processing companies have evolved from small artisanal enterprises. That enabled them to maintain their authenticity in terms of flavours, spices and products, even though the focus has shifted from artisanal to industrial. Their production procedures are efficient and computerised, but always with authenticity in mind. That versatile knowledge and the wide range of products not only make us unique, but also form the basis on which we build to respond efficiently and strongly to the customers' requirements. The line between management and production is usually a short one, which makes it possible for strategic decisions to be taken quickly and always to be on the ball to create bespoke products for our customers. The local Belgian market is high-quality, which helps our manufacturers to remain sharp and always to choose the best products. Our companies have nearly all evolved from a small market, which means they intuitively know how to adapt to small volumes.

Any demand for something new is a precious gift.

Question: How to conquer international markets with Flemish ham? Answer: By using a genuine natural product from exquisite pig breeds, a wide range of products and by being very flexible in responding to the customers' requirements and any new trends. Corma's **Dirk Cornelis** used Ganda Ham to rise to the occasion. He mainly exports to the Netherlands and France and is ready to take the next step in conquering Europe.

D

Dirk Cornelis comes from a family of butchers, transformed an artisan butcher's shop into a leading producer of dry salted ham. Over the course of the last three decades, Ganda Ham has become an institution and you can now find them in every supermarket and grocery amongst the wide range of foreign hams. They have done this in Belgium, the Netherlands and France. How do you do that?

"It would be impossible for us to export our traditional ham. But by looking for niches in which the larger producers have no interest, by making products others do not and by only delivering the highest quality, we can make sure we stand out both here and abroad. And that is typical for artisanal companies like ours. That is the reason we choose superior pig breeds like Duroc, Brasvar, Mangalica and wild boar. Our technical know-how enables us to mature every type of ham perfectly. Our wide range of products also allows us to serve every customer with what they want, from whole hams to 40-gram packs of sliced ham."

"Our companies have flexibility incorporated in their DNA. We gladly listen to buyers from supermarkets and groceries and then try to meet their requirements. Every demand for something

new is a precious gift because we learn a lot from each challenge. The line between the production floor and management is very short, because we are a family-run company. As a result, strategic decisions can be taken quickly and we are on the ball in terms of producing bespoke products for our customers. To try and supply something that is already on the market, but cheaper and better, is not an option. Quality and flavour are our most important ingredients. With our products, we strive to generate additional value, so that they fit in a higher quality market and create a substantial profit margin for our customers."

"By developing new products such as organic ham and dried beef ham, we respond to the latest trends in society, such as more attention to organic products and dry aged beef. Dry salted organic ham comes from organically raised pigs. As for our other pieces of ham we only use sea salt for the dry salting process. For our sliced beef products, we use unique top breeds like Angus, Wagyu and Rubia Gallega, which we offer as Grand Cru sliced beef. We are always on the lookout for niche products enabling purchasers to set themselves apart for their customers. It is in that niche that we want to be different and, above all, very tasty." 

"Using our niche products, buyers can stand out."

Dirk Cornelis, Corma Managing Director.



It is our job to create authentic flavours.


Belgium is a country with very widely diverging tastes, each particular to their own region. Each area has its own specific charcuterie. And if you want to supply all those niches, you need to develop a wide range of products. **Johan Noyen** is the man responsible for producing a wide range of sausages for the whole of the country and he says: “We excel specifically at adapting to all these different tastes and recipes. Using that knowledge allows us to meet the requirements of the local customer, even at an international level.”

Johan Noyen is a fourth-generation butcher of a 100-year old butcher’s family, guarding over the quality of today’s sausages. His company produces, among others, black pudding, white pudding, BBQ-sausages, garlic sausages, Polish and Ghent garlic horse sausages, a certified regional product in Flanders.

“We meet the taste requirements of every local market. Black pudding, for example, has a different taste in every region of Belgium, so we made sure we collected all these typical recipes so we could satisfy all taste requirements. That expertise and experience enable us to develop bespoke products for our customers. Our job is to create authentic flavours.”

“As a Belgian, being interested in food is in our blood. We want to take time out for it. Just look at the number of great chefs we have here, the many gourmet restaurants and our high-quality products. These are all part of our culture. We are only a small country with an open economy, which forces us to go and prove ourselves across

our borders. A way to do that is to couple our entrepreneurship with our Burgundian love of fine food and drink. That is why we make high quality Burgundian products for a critical public.”

“A brand name on its own does not suffice. We create trust by producing high quality products and by being open about the ingredients we use. They must be of the highest quality and therefore sourced from the best hand-picked suppliers. We are, of course, prepared to pay extra for high quality. You still need the best ingredients to make the tastiest products. That is inherent to our trade, as is being transparent. Our sausages contain pork, free-range eggs, bread, onions, milk and spices, and that’s it. We do not use anything you wouldn’t want to use at home in the kitchen, either. So, we are also transparent about our suppliers and include them in all our communications. That is one way in which we stand out and one of the reasons our customers are prepared to pay more for our branded products than for a similar product from another manufacturer.” 

“We produce high quality Burgundian products for a critical public.”

Johan Noyen, Managing Director.



Flavour and quality will always be deciding factors.

Belgian pâté is a major export product, like chocolate, beer and biscuits. Flavour, quality, tradition and one of Europe's most stringent food safety standards are the reasons for our success. **Hendrik Nauta** exports a wide range of pâté products to 15 countries, both under their own brand and under the customers' private bespoke label.

B

"Belgian pâté is creamy, mild and is made with high quality ingredients. Our pâté is a result of centuries of traditional, tasty and high-quality meat products, including our smoked ham and sausages. They are also part of our Burgundian culture and lifestyle, in which artisanal craftsmanship is of the utmost importance. Moreover, our buyers highly trust Belgian meat because of the excellent control methods. We also have one of the most stringent food safety standards in the world and together this creates a very strong quality label."

"We still process freshly slaughtered liver and meat, which is supplied daily. We produce creatively and innovatively, all the while respecting old family traditions. For instance, we still use grandad's 1946 recipes, but nowadays we process our products quicker and we make them bespoke for our customer both here and abroad. When we say bespoke, we mean precisely that. We cooperate with the customer in their thought process so that they can supply their customers with a high-quality product complying with their requirements. One customer asked us to supply pâtés with an animal welfare certificate. We

immediately adjusted our production procedure. For yet another customer, we cooperated with a designer to change their packaging completely, including its shape, labels and weights. The ace up the sleeve of a Belgian company like ours is that we target niche markets and as a result are very flexible on very many levels. We are also very competitive because of our know-how and bespoke service."

"We closely follow all demographic and health developments. We produce pâtés with lower salt content and less saturated fat. Our smallest packaging is 80 grams, which is perfect for single-person households and the on-the-go market. In Belgium, we are also the first producer of organic pâtés for which we even created brand new recipes. Even in the highly price-conscious developing markets of the Czech Republic and Poland, customers spend two to three times as much on our pâtés than they do on their local products. Flavour and quality will always be the deciding factors. For instance, we offer products with additional value to buyers, enabling them to position these in a higher-value market and to stand out with their range of products." 

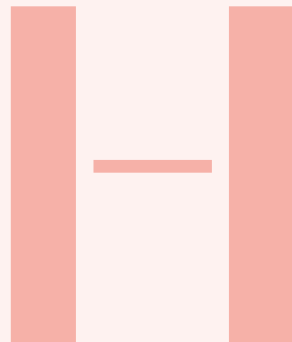
"We have a tradition of tasty and high-quality meat products stretching back centuries."

Hendrik Nauta, Nauta Managing Director.



Our products are always based on authenticity.

Large Belgian expert meat producers like Ter Beke, usually developed from small family enterprises, so they have a lot of in-house knowledge in authentic production methods, even in an industrial environment. The local Belgian market is also high-quality and that spurs producers to keep on their toes and always choose the best products. “Our range of products is pure and multi-faceted. We simply produce excellent products with high-quality fresh basic ingredients.” According to **Wim De Cock**, COO of the publicly-listed company Ter Beke Vleeswaren, that is one of the strengths of the Belgian meat product companies.




“Historically speaking, nearly all of us come from small artisanal enterprises. For that reason, we have been able to maintain our authenticity in terms of flavours, spices and products, even though we have now evolved from an artisanal enterprise to an industrial company. Our production has been completely computerised and thus made much more efficient but always based on authenticity. This versatile knowledge not only makes us unique, it also provides us with the basis we can use to respond very strongly and flexibly to our customers’ needs. For us, that is not difficult, we employ many experts in the group who know a thing or two about taste and experience. To that our renowned food safety policy should be added, which is one of the most stringent in Europe and which enables us to mix it with the big boys.”

“We are privileged precisely because we have developed from a small market. That evolution taught us how to adapt to smaller volumes.

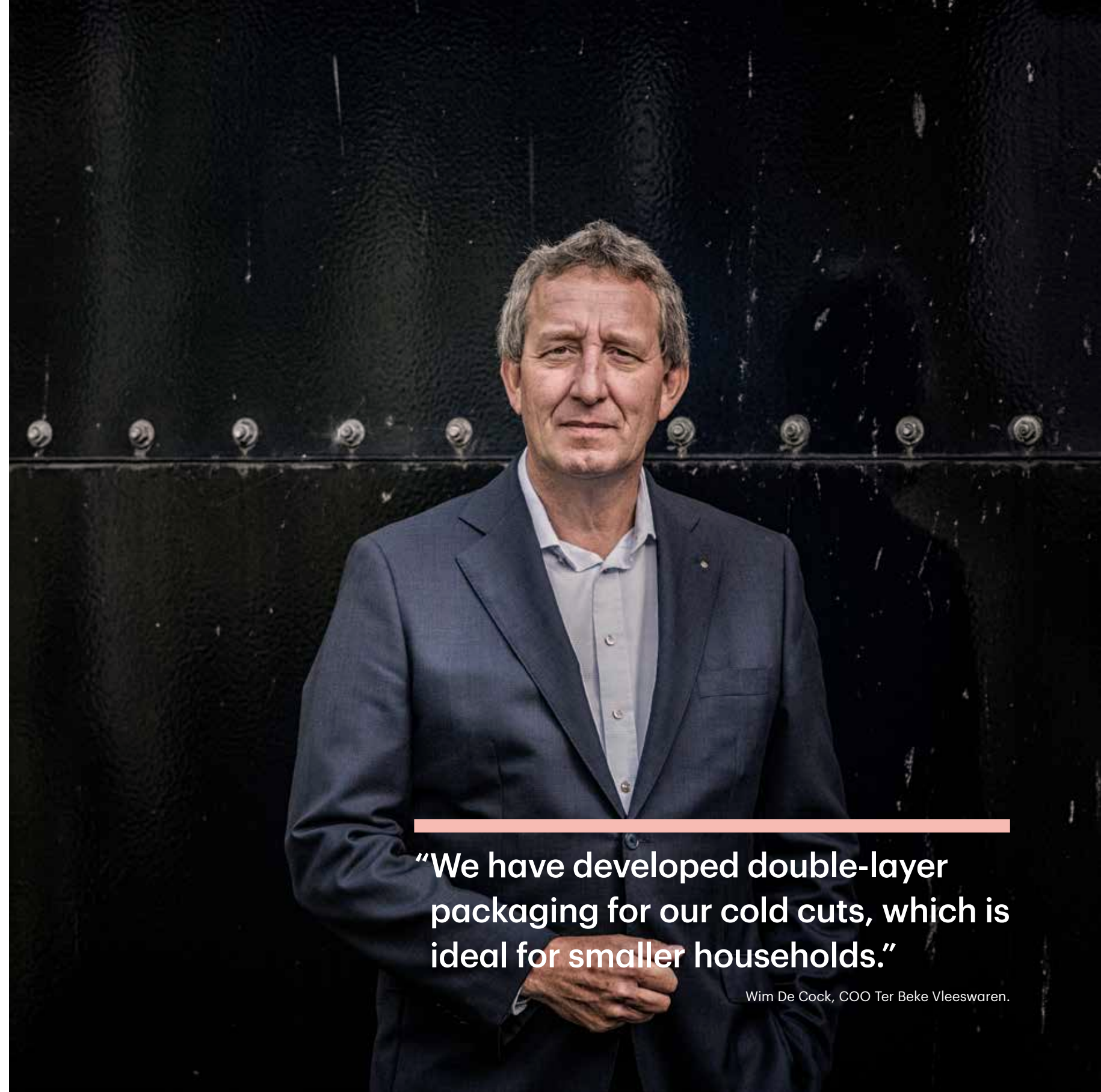
And in our export, we mainly target niche markets. We operate in markets where large local producers do not want to install a separate production line. However, increasing segmentation of basic raw materials due to new national standards remains a substantial challenge in our export markets, but because of our flexibility, we can adjust our production procedures to manage and process our raw materials efficiently.”

“The end product’s high quality is undoubtedly based on the quality of the raw materials. A substantial number of products use the Belgian landrace pig as a quality label because it is lean. But, increasingly, there are breeding programmes using breeds with other intrinsic qualities. The large supermarket chains in Belgium are already developing their proprietary pig label. Together with an important breeder, we are researching and developing the ideal pig for our products. The first results are encouraging and hopefully they will lead to our own Ter Beke-pig.”

“Being flexible also means taking demographic evolutions into account. There the focus is less on the product and more on its packaging. For that reason, we developed double-layer packaging for cold cuts. All the cuts are placed in two separate compartments. When the customer starts using the first compartment, the second remains untouched and unopened, keeping the product fresh. And that is ideal for smaller households. We also focus on environmental issues linked with packaging. We are the first and, as yet, the only producer to have developed 100% bio-degradable film for meat products, with the same durability and oxygen barrier as traditional packaging.” 

“We have developed double-layer packaging for our cold cuts, which is ideal for smaller households.”

Wim De Cock, COO Ter Beke Vleeswaren.





Belgian butchers pass their craft on from one generation to the next, while maintaining their focus on quality and authenticity. Many Belgian meat product manufacturers have evolved from these small artisanal butchers but their products are still made using the recipes of their parents and ancestors. Even in an industrial environment, you can still work in an artisanal way.

FLAVOURS & AUTHENTICITY

Belgium still has many butchers who make their own charcuterie, using traditional flavours and customs from their regions. That is how a rich and unique palate of flavours is created. Belgian butchers are renowned for their pure, genuine and refined meat products. Their recipes are based on fresh raw materials and natural flavourings, mostly obtained from their own terroir.

Willy Deschildre, Hendrik Dierendonck and Herman Vangramberen belong to a select group of iconic Flemish butchers who, each in their own way, put their craft in the limelight and also inspire the Belgian meat product manufacturers with their artisanal charcuterie.

“Belgium has a rich culinary tradition and many regional flavours.”

Willy Deschildre, Deschildre Streekproducten.

A treasure trove of recipes.


After 40 years as an artisanal butcher in Ostend, **Willy Deschildre** decided close up and start a new adventure, together with his son. They opened a centre for regional products with their own workshop and where other producers could also be given space, bringing together tradition and authenticity from across the country.

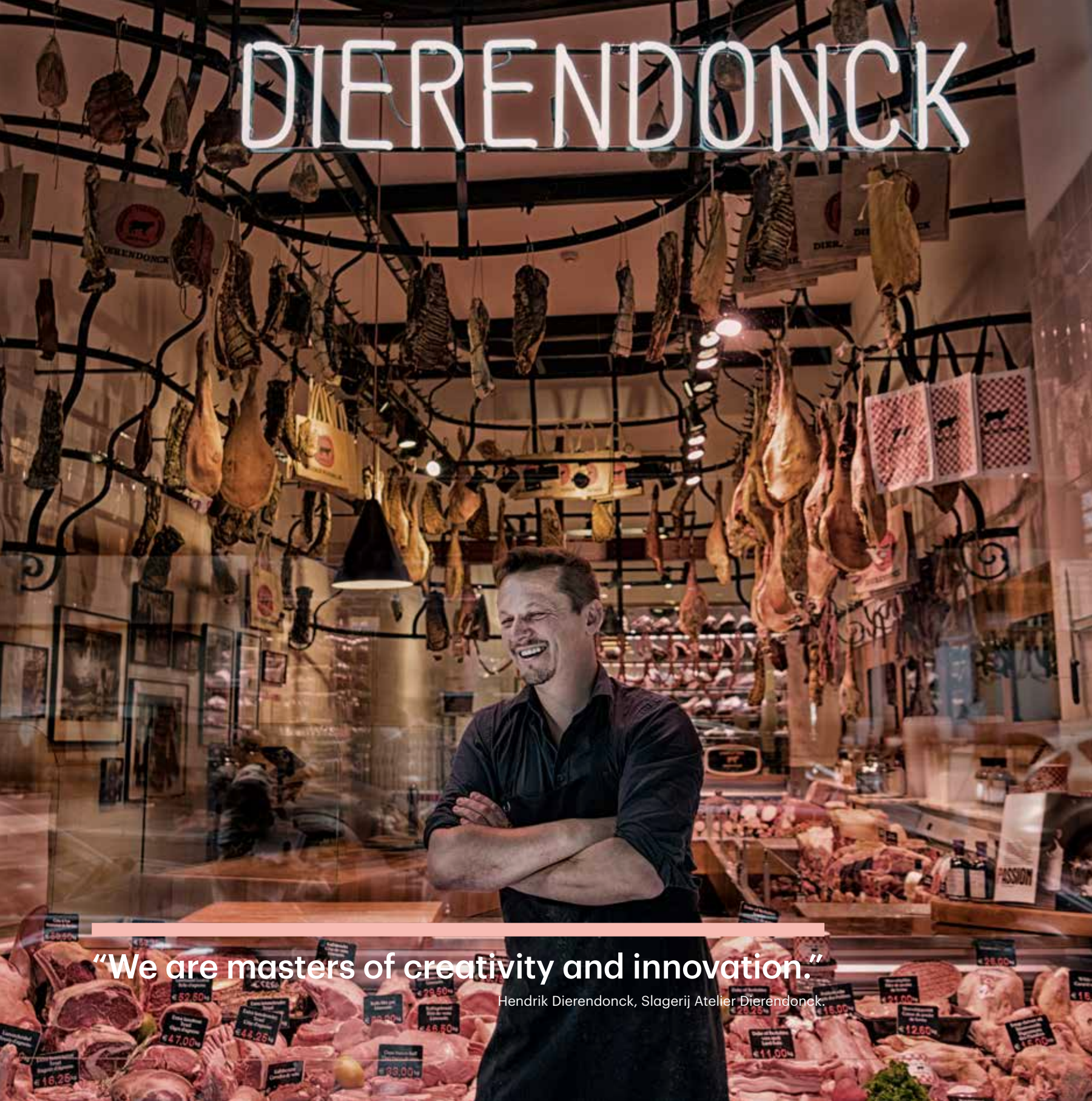


Willy Deschildre has a solid reputation. He had customers from all over the country for his proprietary charcuterie and home-made meat products. Three of his specialities have become certified Flemish Regional Products: West-Vlaamse boerenhesp (West-Flemish farmers' ham), West-Vlaams hoofdvlees (West-Flemish head cheese) and West-Vlaamse bloedworst (West-Flemish black pudding). These inspired him to open a 'Centre for Regional Products,' which is a shop incorporating their workshop where they produce their regional products and where a wide variety of regional products from other regions can be purchased.

“We would love to continue our craft, focusing on our historic products, but presented differently and in cooperation with other producers. Belgium has a rich culinary tradition and many local flavours. There are still very many small meat product manufacturers, producing for their local markets. That results in a rich diversity

of products and flavours. The taste and structure of black pudding for example differs from one village to another. That's why there is such a broad range of recipes: with lots, just a bit or no onion at all, with or without cinnamon, with raisins or almonds. The quantity of blood and meat used also vary strongly from region to region.”

“These local differences in flavour are also true for other Belgian meat products and that is why our meat product manufacturers have a wealth of recipes at their disposal to create their products and stand out in their export markets. Flavour and authenticity characterise our products. I still make products using the original recipes I received from my parents. That has nothing to do with nostalgia but everything to do with the fact that the pure flavours of yesteryear remain attractive to a large group of consumers.” 



“We are masters of creativity and innovation.”

Hendrik Dierendonck, Slagerij Atelier Dierendonck.


You cannot copy authenticity.

Hendrik Dierendonck is one of Belgium’s most famous butchers. His craftsmanship is lauded both in Belgium and abroad. In his products, he combines modern-day craftsmanship with the quality of yesteryear. He also participates in breeding programmes for special breeds.

“Flavour and authenticity are what make us special and set us apart in the export markets. Our methods are pure and we use natural flavours. Our products are still treated with traditional curing methods. We still use our original recipes. Our pâtés, for instance, are made with five recipes, that’s all. We don’t let anything or anybody interfere. We are very proud of our products. They can easily be copied, but you cannot copy their authenticity, which is what makes us special and sets us apart, even on the export markets. we are a country full of artisanal entrepreneurs, focusing strongly on the pure product. The meat sector alone has 180 meat processing enterprises, small and large, each with their own authentic products and flavours.”

“As a butcher, I can stand out. Not just be refining my trade but also by being unique in the meat I choose. So, with a number of farmers,

I established a breeding programme for the Belgian Red, which is an old, extremely rare breed of dual purpose cattle, that can be used for both milk and meat production. These animals can be found on the rich pastures of the West-Flemish polders, which gives the meat a special deep taste. We have a similar project to revive the Menapii pig, which is the prehistoric Belgian pig.”

“The strength of our Flemish entrepreneurs is their creativity and penchant for innovation, while staying true to their craft and the flavours of their products. We, too, use new methods and computers to make our production procedures easier, but that does not mean we do not question the quality of our products. Flavours and quality are beyond discussion. They are our identity.” 

Meat products with a story.

For two years, 'Buy fresh, process fresh and sell fresh' has been the slogan of the Vangramberen butchery at Boutersem, a village between the university city of Louvain and the sugar city of Tienen. **Herman Vangramberen**, his daughters Katrien and Griet and son-in-law David determinedly choose authenticity.

"Maintaining our authenticity is also a source of inspiration for the industry."

Herman Vangramberen, Vangramberen butcher's.

"The strength of the Belgian butcher is their ability to incorporate local flavours in their products. From the start, we went right back to basics, to the taste of our terroir, with authentic recipes we have been using for decades. When is a product artisanal? With an original basic recipe of fresh meat, pepper and salt, local spices and without flavourings. We only use old, natural preservatives, such as dry salt, brine or vinegar."

"A short food chain is very important to us. We need consistent quality and always buy from the same farmers. We know the history of every animal. We can even trace back to the grandmother of the animal hanging in our freezer. Our pigs and cattle have been bred in the same way for decades and they are always fed in the same way. That results in transparency and reliability, both for us and for our customers."

"We make meat products with a history, which is a bonus for the entire Belgian meat processing industry. Because we maintain our identity, we inspire our industry. Like us, they use old recipes they inherited from their ancestors and produce on a large scale what we do on a small scale. The flavour of our products is another bonus for us. These flavours appeal to everyone, both in our neighbouring countries and in Northern and Southern European markets. For centuries, Belgium has been at the crossroads. Our culture has been influenced by many countries who have ruled us through the ages. That has resulted in a rich and refined palate of flavours giving our meat products a reputation for quality. We need to exploit that much more." 

In Belgium, craftsmanship and innovation are taught at school. Belgian butchery schools not only teach youngsters the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge but also focus strongly on innovation. They do this by developing their proprietary charcuterie and participating in competitions.

INNOVATION

Innovative chicken breast with a huge quantity of vegetables on a healthy-sandwich-rich in fibres, that's the combination which won the last annual innovation competition organised by FEVIA, the Federation of the Belgian Food Industry. It was prepared by the Year 11 pupils of the Ter Groene Poorte Butcher School at Bruges. And it wasn't the first time that the school's pupils scooped up this famous prize. For every competition, pupils need to develop a product, taking into account current food trends and customer's requirements, which they then support with a business and marketing plan. That way they learn how to develop new products in practice and to think outside the box. They will become the innovative entrepreneurs of the future who will lead the way in developing the range of Belgian charcuterie products.





“Innovation is a mainstay in the subjects offered by the Belgian butchery schools.”

Gerdi Termote, technical advisor at butcher school Ter Groene Poorte.

Young butchers are learning how to develop new products themselves

Innovation starts at school.

Experiments with new products

How can you make young people sufficiently self-confident to succeed as a butcher? By not only providing them with plenty of basic knowledge but also by letting them experiment with new products. At Ter Groene Poorte in Bruges, Belgium's biggest butcher school, innovation is a mainstay in their range of subjects. Every pupil in the final year receives the freedom to develop a meat product of their own. "Innovation doesn't necessarily mean a new product. It could also be a reinterpretation of an old product. In any event, it must be completely different from that already on the market," according to **Gerdi Termote**, technical advisor at Ter Groene Poorte, who also managed the young butchers participating in the innovation competition.

Interaction between school and meat processing companies

The school houses several departments: butchery, bakery, hotel, industrial kitchen and food technology. That enables the school to call on specialists in different fields of expertise. "A group of experienced people knows more than one genius on their own. Everybody is an expert in something and by bringing these people together, we add another trump to what we're offering.



The meat processing industry picked up on that and because of our collective expertise we are asked many questions on ideas around 'research and development' or providing support. Not just support to cooperate in developing new products, but also to monitor breeding programmes of new pig breeds, for instance. Professionals from the meat processing industry also regularly come and join us to update their basic knowledge on cutting methods or the traditional processing of artisanal meat products amongst others. These result in an enjoyable interaction which, more often than not, creates innovative developments. In that way, we, as a school, create unique ties with meat processing companies and can keep a close eye on the latest developments, which is obviously always of great benefit to our pupils."

Product development at school


The Belgian meat processing industry substantially invests in innovation and continuous growth. To safeguard this success, all these companies must remain competitive and continue to attract correctly trained employees. Our Belgian butcher schools play an important role in meeting this demand. "Our pupils learn everything they need to know in terms of cuts and charcuterie preparations. In their final year they must,



for instance, be able to butcher a whole pig and process all the parts in charcuterie. But we also give our pupils the tools to develop their own products independently, not only in term time but also by letting them participate in competitions. In doing so, they respond to new trends which, in many cases, relate to healthy choices, such as reduced salt and fat content, lower calories or greater sustainability. An important starting point is to make people eat more healthily without them noticing. For instance, our students won the FEVIA innovation competition a few years ago, with a product made from chicken and 30% forgotten vegetables. They not only innovatively blended meat and vegetables, but also scored with the versatility of the product. It could be used on a sandwich, as a schnitzel with a hot meal or battered as fried snack."



Healthy sandwich

Projects are always judged by science and industry experts on the basis of their sustainability, market potential and customers' attraction. "Our pupils participate in many competitions and sometimes they win prizes, sometimes they don't. But participation will always motivate them to go and do better. Only recently a group of students in their final year at Ter Groene Poorte won the innovation prize with a 'healthy sandwich'. "The fibre rich sandwich had been developed by pupils in the bakery department, while the chicken breast and vegetable filling had been developed by the butchery department. The sandwich was aimed at the on-the-go market and came in re-sealable and recyclable packaging. The multi-disciplinary approach also forces our students to look outside their specific field of expertise to develop innovative products. But there is no innovation without craftsmanship and creativity. There is no other country in Europe that does more to bring culinary specialities together than Belgium. A Belgian craftsman will always have high-quality products. Tasty authentic flavours are our strength and continue to form the basis of every innovation." 

A selection of artisan fine meats from Belgium



Cooked ham



Dried ham



Chicken breast



Pepper salami



Cooked sausage



Salami



Antwerp fillet / Filet d'anvers



Bacon



Sausages



Products in aspic



Paté



Rillettes of porc

The range of Belgian meat products is based on centuries-old craftsmanship, a very rich taste palate and modern production methods. There is a wide variety of authentic and high-quality products. Looking for a supplier? Please visit www.artisanfinemeats.be

Notes

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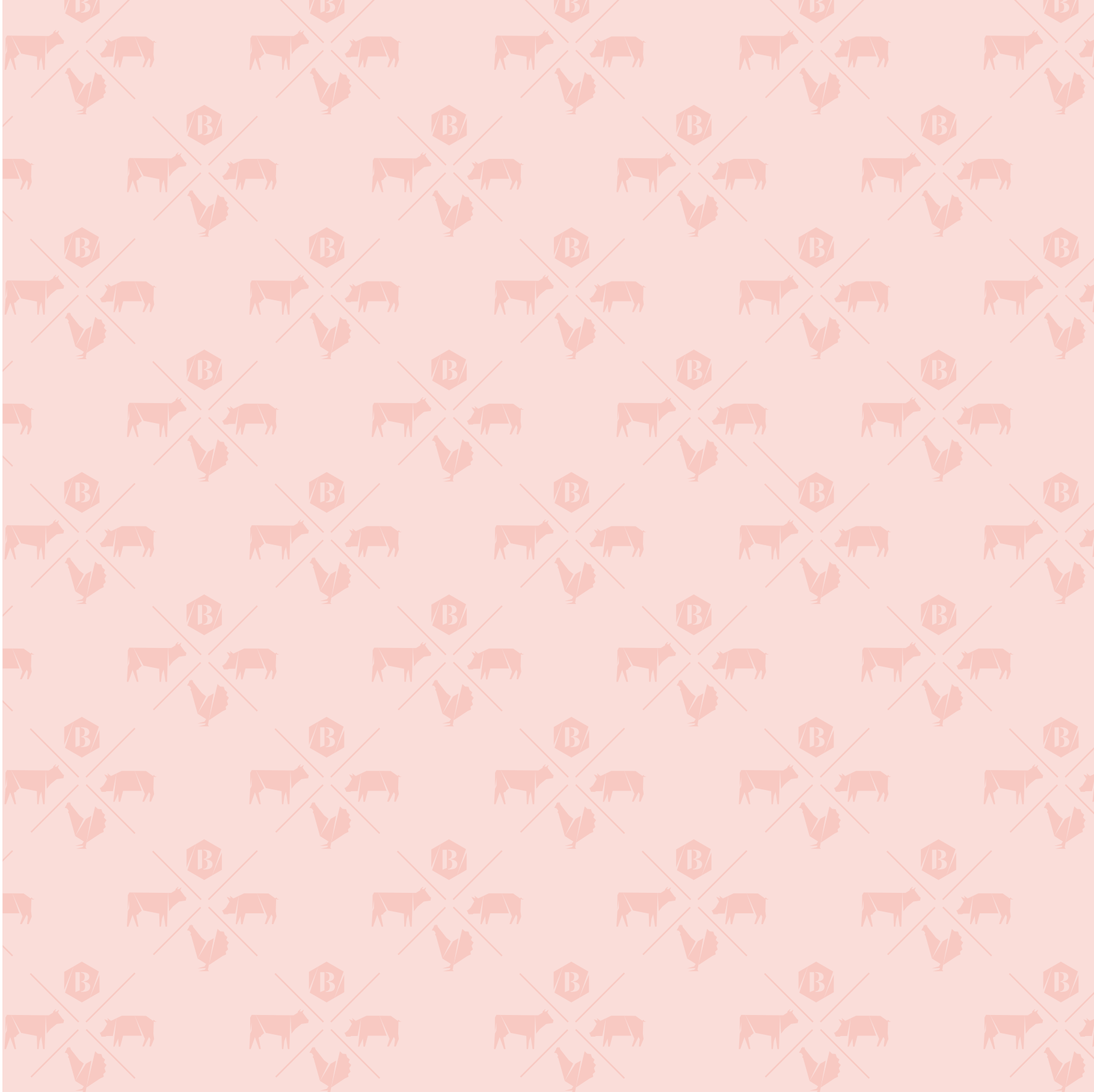
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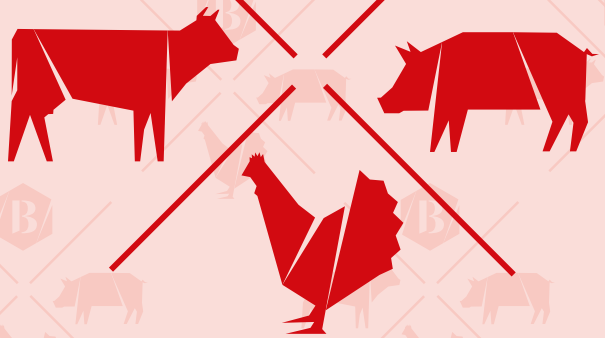
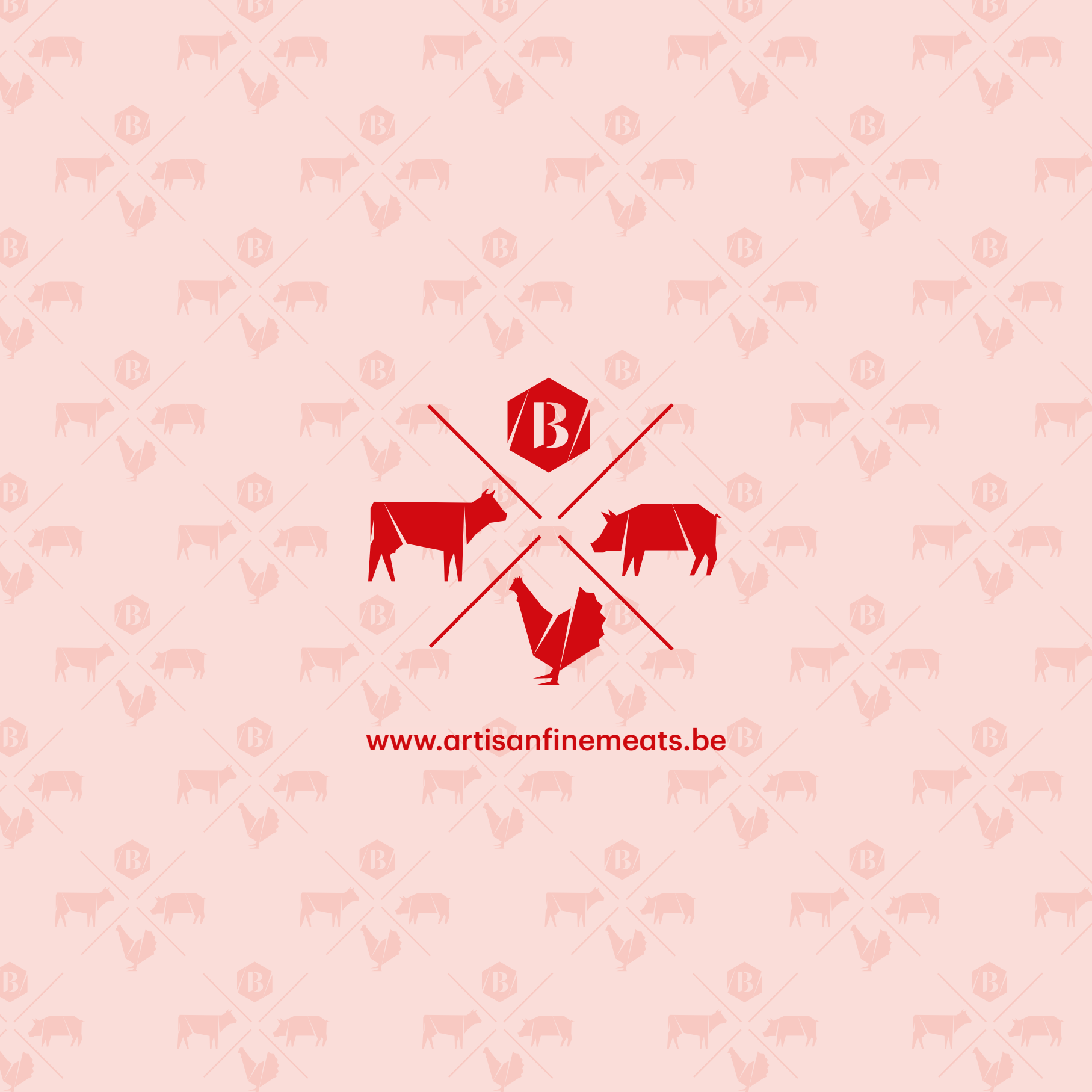
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