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9 great Bay Area butcher shops from Santa Cruz to Berkeley and beyond



One of the inaugural tenants at the recently opened Castro Valley Marketplace is Barons Quality Meats & Seafood. (Photo courtesy of Castro Valley Marketplace)

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These days, many of us are moving more toward plant-based and planet-focused eating, with Meatless Mondays expanding to multiple days of the week. So, when we do indulge our inner

Lucky for us, the Bay Area offers a plethora of artisanal and whole-animal butcher shops to match any meat mood, whether you need a \$50 dry-aged steak for your Valentine or paper thin rib-eye for making bulgogi.

From Santa Cruz to Los Altos to Berkeley, these butcher shops go beyond the typical meat counter to offer custom cuts, cooking suggestions and even animal shares, which allow you to purchase a part of a cow or pig and enjoy all of the cuts at an economical price while supporting regional farmers.



Marin Sun Farms is located inside Market Hall in Oakland. (Courtesy Market Hall)

Marin Sun Farms, Oakland

A leader in nose-to-tail butchery, this famed shop inside Oakland's Rockridge Market Hall is stocked with local grass-fed, pasture-raised and organic meats. Purchase a whole, half or quarter animal — cow, pig, goat or lamb — and have it cut to your specifications as steaks, roasts, ground meat and even bones in vacuum-sealed packages. Nothing goes to waste. Tallow production makes things like soap, fertilizers and biofuels.

Co-owners Dave Evans and Claire Herminjard operate the last USDA-inspected slaughterhouse in the Bay Area, a certified organic and animal welfare-approved operation near Petaluma that works with California farming families who adhere to their strict standards.

Details: Open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at Rockridge Market Hall, 5655 College Ave., Oakland;

www.marinsunfarms.com



Master Butcher offers a full array of goat meat, from chops to shanks to organ meats. (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group)

Master Butcher, Sunnyvale

Tucked into a corner of the Cala Center on El Camino Real is butcher Usman Ali's shop, one that serves the South Bay's sizeable communities of Indo-Americans and other customers who eat halal.

Master Butcher hasn't been open for long — it opened during the pandemic — but it's attracted an appreciative base of customers looking for cuts of meat and varieties of fish that aren't carried by generic groceries. If you cook from scratch, you'll find fresh cuts of goat, lamb and chicken in one display case. Want to get dinner on the table more quickly? Another case features chicken pieces already marinated in tandoori, herbal yarahali or lohari curry sauces.

Not a whiz in the kitchen? No worries — because Ali and his crew are. Select two of the four daily specials — maybe a chicken thigh curry redolent of red and green bell peppers or a fall-off-the-bone goat curry — for the \$10.99 lunch plate that comes with naan and rice. You can also order family-size quantities of curries, tandoori, seekh kebabs and more for takeout.

Details: Open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at 1111 W. El Camino Real, Sunnyvale;
<https://masterbutcher.us>.



A sandwich piled high with the legendary Fred's Steak from Schaub's Meat, Fish & Poultry at Stanford Shopping Center in Palo Alto. (Thu Hoang Ly/Bay Area News Group archives)

Schaub's Meat, Fish & Poultry

An upscale retail center is not the first place you'd expect to find a terrific butcher, but meat lovers have been flocking to Stanford Shopping Center in Palo Alto for decades for just that.

Want to join those in the know? We have two words for you: Fred's Steak.

This is the coal-black slab of bottom sirloin you see in the display case. A cult following has developed since patriarch Fred Schaub first developed the top-secret marinade recipe and procedure — yes, there's a procedure; that's secret too — and started selling it at his butcher shop in Los Gatos in 1960. Customers loved how the dark crust sealed in the juices of the meat. These days you can buy a choice, prime or Kobe steak done Fred's way to take home for the oven or grill or indulge on the spot with a Fred's Steak sandwich.

After you've acquainted yourself with Fred's legacy, check out the rest of the offerings — including prime roasts and housemade sausages — at this full-service butcher.

Details: Open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday at 395 Stanford Shopping Center, Palo Alto. 650-325-6328.

The Local Butcher Shop, Berkeley

Co-founded by a former Chez Panisse cook and employee-owned since 2021, this small, pristine butcher shop with its white subway tiles and whole animal philosophy is a favorite of Ghourmet

The Local Butcher Shop purchases whole animals from ranchers and farmers, such as Liberty Ducks and Macgruder Ranch, located within 150 miles of the shop. All meats — from the porchetta to the English-style beef short ribs — are pasture-raised, antibiotic- and hormone-free and cut to order. The meat that doesn't make it into the display case goes into a rotating array of sausages, pates, stocks, rendered fats and sauces. They even make soap and dog treats.

And since most of the trained butchers are also chefs, they are eager to share recipes and cooking methods and regularly offer classes (hello, Confit and Rillettes Making).

Details: Open from 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and until 6 p.m. Saturday-Monday at 1600 Shattuck Ave. Suite 120 (entrance on Cedar St.), Berkeley; <https://thelocalbutchershop.com>



Sausages hang in a cooler prior to the smoking process at Dittmer's Gourmet Meats & Wurst-Haus, a Peninsula favorite since 1978. (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group archives)

Dittmer's Gourmet Meats & Wurst-Haus

So. Many. Sausages.

Bratwurst. Weisswurst. Andouille. Lamb Merguez. Chicken Spinach. Plus about 35 other varieties, all made in-house at Dittmer's, a Peninsula institution for German goodies. The full-service butcher shop and deli was established in 1978 by Dittmer Bubert, who started learning the trade at the age of 12 at his family's deli in Hamburg, Germany.

He passed his skills and recipes along to the next generation. These days, daughter Petra Silva and granddaughter Katie run the operation — and it's a massive one, numbering more than 100 meaty selections, many of them hard to find.

"We make everything we sell," Katie says proudly.

Details: The sandwich bar is currently on hiatus; when it reopens, try the sausage of the day. Open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday at 4540 El Camino Real, Los Altos; www.dittmers.com.



C & H Meat's thinly-sliced beef ribeye is a popular choice for making shabu shabu. (Courtesy C & H Meat)

C & H Meat Company, Castro Valley

Home of the Oakland Kalbi — yes, that's a registered trademark — this [Korean-American eatery and butcher shop](#) started in San Francisco in 1982, long before the Bay Area's obsession with Korean food began. These days, you'll find Mama Cho's exclusive cut of Angus beef short ribs at the meat counter in Castro Valley along with prime, grass fed and organic cuts of everything else you need to master Korean barbecue or Japanese dishes like shabu shabu.

Located inside Lake Chabot Public Market, C & H's friendly, knowledgeable staff offers a dizzying array of marinated beef, pork and chicken options, plus unique items like house-made spicy Thai chicken sausage and even Kurobuta pork belly. You'll find rib-eye sliced specifically for shabu shabu

Details: Open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday-Saturday at Lake Chabot Public Market, 18911 Lake Chabot Road, Castro Valley; <http://chmeat.com>.



Adding to the appeal of Los Gatos Meats & Smokehouse is the enduring vintage look, complete with checkerboard floor. (Jim Gensheimer/Bay Area News Group archives)



Los Gatos Meats & Smokehouse

Talk about well-aged meat. The roots of this Bay Area butchery run deep — back to 1891 or earlier, when local hunters and fishermen would bring their haul to the Los Gatos Meat folks for processing and smoking.

For the past 30 years, the Chiala family has owned the business. They still handle plenty of wild game — primarily deer, elk, wild pigs — because, as daughter Jackie Rose notes, this is one of the few remaining game processors in California. And if you have a hankering for alligator or frog legs or ostrich, they've got them.

The rest of the business is devoted to making and smoking customer favorites, using natural, hormone- and antibiotic-free meats. Among the bestsellers are the Cheesy Bavarian sausages, the beef/bacon/cheese patties, the many varieties of jerky and bacon, along with the hefty sandwiches piled with smoked tri-tip, turkey or pulled pork.

Details: Open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Saturday at 575 University Ave., Los Gatos; www.losgatosmeats.com.

Barons Quality Meats & Seafood, Alameda

Open in the Alameda Marketplace since 2005, this multigenerational, family-run butcher shop has roots dating back to 1915, when owner David Samiljan's great-grandfather, David Baron, opened Baron's Meat & Poultry, a kosher butcher shop in Brooklyn, New York.

These days you'll find Samiljian, a trained chef as well as a butcher, behind the counter cutting all-natural pork and lamb from whole muscle to make an array of sausages, or marinating Barons' signature Black Dragon tri-tip, made with a proprietary blend that includes maple syrup and balsamic vinegar. Niman Ranch? Check. Mary's Free-Range birds? Yup.

Barons' meats come from animals with no antibiotics or hormones; they're always humanely-treated, fed a human-grade vegetarian diet and are pasture-raised when possible.

Details: Open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at 1650 Park St., Alameda, and from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily at 3295 Castro Valley Blvd., Castro Valley; www.baronsmeats.com

El Salchichero, Santa Cruz

From the moment you arrive at this charcuterie and butcher shop in Santa Cruz's hip Swift Street Courtyard, you know you're in carnivore heaven. The "Open" sign hangs from a giant meat cleaver. The front door handles are sculptural sausage links. And the offerings range from steaks, poultry and chops to housemade California chorizo, maple syrup-bourbon bacon and pineapple and rum pork jerky.



Chris LaVeque's 'Open' sign hangs from a cleaver based on his grandfather's. (Dan Coyro/Sentinel Archives)

Opened by chef and sausage maker — “el Salchichero” — Chris LaVeque in 2011, the shop includes a small, inviting space for customers to browse the meaty options, of course, but also housemade condiments, including spicy mustards, barbecue sauces and intriguing pickles. (How intriguing? Think lavender and brown sugar beets, bread and butter onions and tequila jalapeños.)

5 more great butcher shops

Livermore Butcher Shop: Family-owned and operated with a wide variety of cuts, including bone-in pork chops, rib-eye steaks and housemade sausages, plus sandwiches. 282 S. L St. Livermore; <https://livermorebutchershop.com>.

Milo's Meat Shop: Opened in mid-2020 with a wide variety of Wagyu, prime and choice-grade beef, including the Brazilian picanha cut and marinated tri-tip and skirt steak. Also seafood (especially shrimp), pork and organic chicken. 6945 Monterey Road, Gilroy.

Mercado de Valle: Multi-generation butchers in the back of this unassuming Mexican market specialize in a wide variety of pork, including smoked pork chops and housemade chicharrón prensado, plus menudo and marinated meats for fajitas. 1651 Monument Blvd., Concord.

Saratoga Meat & Fish: Butcher-owner Tony Nora specializes in grass-fed, natural cuts of meat, sustainable seafood, house-made sausages and marinades. Lunch offerings feature smoked meats, chowder and (sometimes) paella. 14320 Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road, Saratoga; www.saratogameatandfish.com.

Galvan's: Longtime butcher and Spanish market known for wild, sustainable seafood and housemade smoked brisket and pastrami. Don't miss cheeses, charcuterie and imported goods from Spain and Portugal. 1275 MacArthur Blvd, San Leandro; www.instagram.com/galvansmarket

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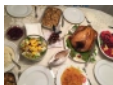
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