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LIVING SIDE DISH

NYC's impending foie gras ban has boosted sales up to 30 percent

By Jennifer Gould Keil

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The New York City Council's [recent move to ban foie gras](#) has only served to goose sales for the fatty delicacy, the industry claims.

Since the November vote, sales of the buttery goose and duck liver are up 20 percent to 30 percent, according to farmers, distributors and chefs who say news of the ban has only helped to remind customers how much they love it.

"Once people read about it, those who love foie gras or have it occasionally say, 'Let's go have some foie gras.' It's almost a political statement to politicians — stay off of my dinner table," said Georgette Farkas, owner of Rotisserie Georgette on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

"The day New Yorkers heard about the ban, every single table ordered foie gras. Even at the bar," chimed in Marco Moreira, the executive chef and owner of French restaurant Tocqueville near Union Square.

Moreira said sales of foie gras, which means fatty liver in French, have spiked 25 percent, including a recent private party at the restaurant that saw foie gras dishes served to 70 guests.

"People are up in arms that other people can decide what they can and can't eat. It's ridiculous!" Moreira fumed. "Besides, you'll still be able to drive your car to New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut to buy it."

Ariane Daguin, founder of D'Artagnan, a New Jersey-based national meat-and-game distribution company, said that her New York City sales to top restaurants increased 30 percent since the law was announced. Her current chefs — including Daniel Boulud of Daniel; Daniel Rose of Le Coucou; and David Chang of Momofuku — upped their orders.

But new, younger chefs have also started ordering and putting foie gras on their menus, like Jason Atherton of The Clocktower, she said.



Marco Moreira, chef and owner of Tocqueville in Manhattan.

Annie Wermiel/NY Post





A foie gras dish at Tocqueville.
Annie Wermiel/NY Post

City council members banned the process for growing foie gras, known as gavage, claiming it is inhumane and equivalent to torture. Gavage involves ducks and geese being force-fed with tubes down their throats three times a day for 12 weeks to fatten their livers.

The ban was sponsored by Manhattan councilwoman Carlina Rivera, who told The Post the fatty livers can still be bought and sold through 2022 to give farms and distributors time to adjust.

Rivera also said the law won't eliminate foie gras so much as the force-feeding method — and that she

encourages all foie gras-producing farms to pursue other methods of production that skip the throat tubes, such as those done by farmers in Spain using highly dense foods.

Still, Rivera and the other lawmakers who backed the bill are in for a fight.

Earlier this month, Hudson Valley Foie Gras and La Belle Farms filed petitions with the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, stating that the ban is an “unreasonable restriction” on their farms.

“We asked the state to declare it unconstitutional,” said Marcus Henley, manager of Hudson Valley Foie Gras, a 200-acre farm that raises ducks. “We do intend to challenge the city’s foie gras ban in state and federal court.”

Henley said that 400 farmers will lose their jobs and that “the financial devastation for the farms and [Sullivan] county is enormous.”

In the US, only California has successfully banned foie gras. But the US Supreme Court declined to hear a case seeking to squash the ban — leaving a 2017 federal appeals court decision in place that upheld the law.

New Yorkers have a better chance of beating it back in large part because the law was handed down by the city, which doesn't have oversight over what people eat, said Robert Bookman, a lawyer who specializes in municipal and state regulatory issues.

“It's a slam dunk,” he said. “The city has broad and vague power to protect the health and welfare of its residents and this has nothing to do with that.”

If the fatty liver is outlawed in 2022, chefs say they won't substitute regular paté, which is made of poultry, game, beef, seafood, lamb, pork or vegetables ground into a paste and seasoned.

“If the foie ban happens, I won't sell paté,” said chef Sung Park of Ivy Lane. “Duck liver paté is not like foie gras. The richness, sweetness, and texture make a big difference, and normal duck liver just doesn't have the same qualities.”

