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It's a beloved taste throughout Spain, yet one of the world's finest and most expensive delicacies is not easily accessible in the United States: Iberico ham. Once prohibited from being imported into the country, 100% Iberico jamon now can be found only in select gourmet retailers and a handful of fine restaurants.

**FERMIN Iberico** ham first brought it to the U.S. market in 2007, quickly followed by **Cinco Jotas**. La Tienda offers a

range of Iberico jamon online and this 14.5 pound piece will run you \$1,148.95 , on sale including shipping, but it doesn't come with the holder.

To appreciate why Iberico jamon is so valued, one must understand the conditions in which it's produced. First, it is nearly impossible to recreate the complex weather conditions found in Jabugo, where the ancient breed of black pig, found only in Spain, roams wild on two to four acres each. An herbivore, it only feeds on herbs, vegetables and primarily acorn. Lots of acorn. In fact, the pig's acorn-rich diet is what makes Iberico ham stand out from other types of ham and helps give it its unique and nutty flavor.



*ATRIO's Executive Chef Antonio Cardoso carving Iberico ham, now available off-the-menu. (Photo courtesy of ATRIO and Conrad New York*



*Hotel.)*

Then there is the time-consuming process to make it into the final product. The ham is laid in sea salt for several days, removed, cleaned off and cured before it's placed into an underground cave for two and a half to three and a half years. It's not done yet. The maestro jamonero comes in for quality control and to give the final approval that it's ready for market.

The fact that Iberico ham is so rare and takes so much time to prepare is part of the reason that its cost rivals that of other delicacies like caviar. The other reason was that import regulations restricted it from making its way across the pond and into the United States until 2007.

Being from Portugal, [ATRIO](#) Executive Chef Antonio Cardoso was no stranger to Iberico ham so he was especially excited when the opportunity presented itself to introduce Cinco Jotas 100% Iberico ham to his guests as an off-the-menu option. At [ATRIO, Conrad New York hotel's](#) on-property restaurant, Cardoso personally comes out to carve and serve the Iberico ham right at his guests' table.

"We are serving it plain, with grilled Tuscan bread, or as a complement to some of our current spring dishes, for example, our Local Burrata," says Cardoso. "ATRIO is the perfect restaurant to feature Cinco Jotas as we are not only able to complement it with some of our great wines but it blends very well with the Mediterranean cuisine."

He recommends pairing Iberico ham with a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon.

ATRIO joins the ranks of [L'Atelier Joel Robuchon in Paris](#), [Da Dong Roast Duck in Beijing](#) and [La Marée in Moscow](#)

now offering Spain's national treasure but be sure to ask for it since you won't find it on the menu. And, like wine is best after you open the bottle, Iberica ham tastes best when enjoyed as soon as it's sliced.