



By: Sidra Durst Photos: Jennifer O'Keeffe (1)

Meaty matters

Meatpaper magazine has blood on its pages



There are magazines for almost every niche on the spectrum of human interest, from cat breeding to coin collecting. But a magazine about meat and meat culture still surprises, primarily because, well, who knew there was so much to talk about?

Au contraire, say the co-founders of Meatpaper, Sasha Wizansky and Amy Standen, who contend that eating that hamburger brings up questions of philosophy, morality, politics, science and art – along with the occasional recipe for beef heart salad.

“The things that are troubling are also inspiring,” says Sasha Wizansky, 34, who is more inclined towards drawing metaphorical parallels with meat than handing out marinating recipes. We are sitting in Bar Bambino, a Mission District restaurant where salumi is the calling card. “Meat is very much that thing. And that is why we never run out of content for the magazine.”

Meat is an emotive subject

According to Wizansky, the idea for the quarterly magazine came from a project about meat she did while in New York some years ago, which involved eating meat continuously for 24 hours – “we were completely ill by the end” – and at the same time interviewing strangers to ask them their thoughts on meat. What she found was that emotions ran high around the topic. Everyone had a story to tell, whether it was about a traditional family dish or about the trauma of witnessing their first pig slaughter as a young child.

Amy Standen, eschewing the charcuterie plate for tomato bruschetta, substantiates this: “Most people are really uncomfortable with the story of meat.” Including Standen herself, who earlier this year returned to vegetarianism. “I probably wouldn’t have done it if I wasn’t working on the magazine,” she says.

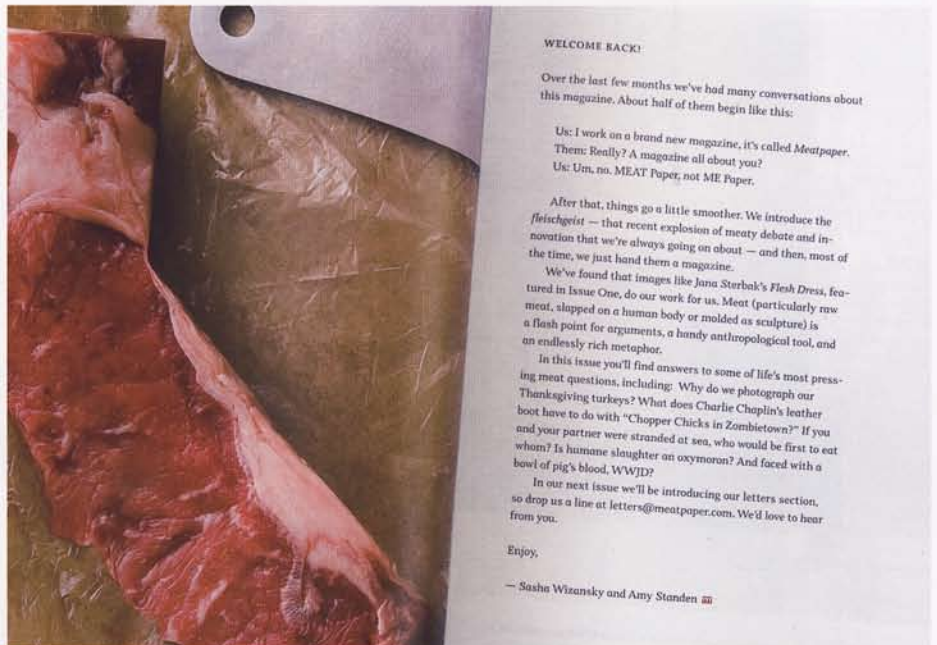
Even vegetarians read Meatpaper

“Somehow it solidifies what we’re doing,” says Wizansky, who had her own stretch of meat-free living but has now rejoined the community of carnivores. “So far I haven’t found any meat that I haven’t tried,” she says.

Yet their aim is not to whet the appetite of their readers – who number plenty of chefs among them – for

meat. “It’s hard for people to believe we don’t have an agenda.” Over half of their contributors are vegetarians, and their readers also include a number of non-meat-eaters who simply want to know what meat is all about. And many of the magazine’s readers would just like to be able to enjoy their meat with greater awareness, which calls for more and better information.

The original idea for Meatpaper magazine hailed from Wizansky, a Harvard-educated graphic designer. She enlisted Standen, a trained journalist, to help start the publication. Last year, the debut issue of the magazine hit the shelves, the cover glowing pink with Dali-esque imagery of a landscape of steaks. Inside, it featured an interview with an artist who makes maps out of Spam, insights from a self-described “shameful





Well done: Sasha Wizansky and Amy Standen have managed to launch a stylish magazine on the newsstands that is all about meat.

carnivore”, and an essay comparing a beef cuts chart to the layout of Manhattan. Later issues covered such subjects as the secret pork trade in Israel.

Eating is a way of life in San Francisco

The American media enthusiastically welcomed Meatpaper and its dedication to “meaty matters”. The Washington Post, for one, hailed it as “A Choice Quarterly That’s Well Done, and Rare”.

In a city where responsible eating is a way of life (see also page 24/25) and the DIY ethic stretches from curing your own prosciutto to launching a web-based company in your basement, Meatpaper makes even more sense.

“Starting your own magazine,” says Wizansky, chewing thoughtfully on a sliver of coppa (cured pork shoulder), “represents one of the most independent forms of a cultural product that exists.” And in the case of this particular magazine, that product is food for thought, too. ☺

www.meatpaper.com