

# Eat Your Way Through the Animal Kingdom at the Newport Jerky Company



If you are the kind of person who goes to the zoo and thinks, “I wonder what that son-of-a-bitch tastes like,” then the Newport Jerky Company is for you.

I am a self-confessed jerky addict. Maybe it’s the chewy texture. Maybe it’s the spicy taste. Whatever it is, I’ll eat jerky every chance I get. I’m also the kind of guy who drinks hot sauce and puts bacon on my bacon. The owners of the Newport Jerky Company built a store for people just like me.

Ever wonder what a snapping turtle tastes like? How about a camel or a python? “I won’t be shy to tell you if something tastes gross,” says Jay Souza, who owns the shop with partner Derek Medico. Like zebra tarantula, which I will admit that on Jay’s recommendation I opted out of trying. “Too crunchy for me,” says Souza. The earthworm jerky was another I’ll-take-your-word-on-it taste treat.

I did try the kangaroo jerky, which is perfect for athletes looking for a low-fat protein boost. It had a nice mild taste and zero fat because, according to Souza, “They hop around all day and keep lean, not like the lazy cow.” Python was the store’s biggest seller last year. I hate snakes more than Indiana Jones does, so I got my revenge and took a bite. It was tough, but had a nice flavor.

If you are less interested in dare me foods (Katie Lewis, I dare you to eat the zebra tarantula), there is a huge selection of just plain old, expertly handmade beef jerky. As lovers of all things local, Jay and Derek created jerky using Narragansett beer and another variation using a selection of herbs and Newport Vineyards red wine. The latter was particularly delicious and tender. And they are currently creating a recipe using Sons of Liberty whiskey.

The store carries a line of vegan and vegetarian jerky that Jay claimed was delicious; however, I took his word for it and stuck with my plan to eat my way through the animal kingdom.



Super high in protein and low in fat, small-batch jerky like

that made and sold by The Newport Jerky company is, surprisingly, a health food. “Not like that Jack Links crap, which is full of sodium and preservatives and breaks your teeth,” said Souza. The recipes are created in-store by Jay and Derek, then a father/son team in Nevada makes the jerky, which is hand crafted in small batches, vacuum-sealed, then USDA and FDA inspected and approved.

Not just about jerky, this is a place that caters to lovers of all things spicy, meaty and strange. There is bacon everything. Bacon-flavored sriracha, beer bacon chipotle hot sauce, bacon soap, bacon lip balm. Another hot item is the roadkill sausage, which is not made from roadkill, just a mashup of a dozen animals you might find in the grill of a mac truck. Or you could dine on sausage made from the mysterious jackalope. Says Souza, “I showed it to a couple of staff members who said, ‘I thought jackalope was fake.’” Oh no. They are real. Look it up.

When stopping by, try the fire cider. It’s delicious and can cure a hangover, end a cold or give you a pick-me-up. The store’s extensive line of hot sauces also shouldn’t be missed. Bloody Mary lovers can put a new spin on brunch with one of the store’s mixes, featuring flavors like bacon cheeseburger and lobster with wasabi. Pour it over ice, then garnish it with a meat straw. The store also boasts a massive selection of meat sticks, including unusual meats like elk and alligator. Souza said someone once asked for a squirrel stick, however, “we won’t be stocking squirrel anytime soon.”

For those of you with a sweet tooth, check out the healthy selection of bug lollipops, which inspired a tantrum from my 2-year-old when I turned down his request to try one. These aren’t like the lollipops they give away at the bank, kid. I don’t think you want that.

The Newport Jerky Company’s new location already has plenty of fans in the neighborhood. Across the street, the Brick Alley Pub offers a Newport Jerky Bloody Mary made with Absolut Peppar vodka and the store’s Roadkill Chipotle Hot Sauce, then rimmed with bacon salt and garnished with herb and red wine jerky. Head over there after your shopping trip — it’ll get the zebra tarantula taste out of your mouth.

*Visit the new store at 424 Thames St or stop by the original at 125 Swinburne Row, both in Newport. Or shop online at [newportjerkycompany.com](http://newportjerkycompany.com)*