

FRESH CREATIVITY

The spectre of continuing record-high beef and lamb prices is driving fresh creativity from retail butchers.

Butchers' options include longer ageing of cheaper beef, changing price tags from per kilogram to per meal-size portion, and stepping up value adding, including being more creative with mince.

Shifting focus to better promote chicken and pork is another option.

In the US recently, high beef prices led to pork sales overtaking beef for the first time to become the number two protein behind cheaper chicken.

Australian beef processors and wholesalers have so far been partly absorbing rising cattle prices which are flowing from extreme overseas demand and a smaller national herd.

They fear a backlash at retail level. Consumers have viable protein alternatives which they might become accustomed to long term.

Despite booming exports and Free Trade Agreements, Australia remains the beef industry's largest and most profitable market.

But while butchers have largely been cushioned so far, retail prices will inevitably rise – some say by another 50%.

As it is, MLA tips Australian beef consumption this year to fall by 5.9% to an average of 26.9kg a person and lamb consumption to drop by 11% to 7.9kg per person.

Butchers adjust strategies to foil record-high prices

With higher prices looming, retail butchers - with a proud history of adapting and innovating – are planning how to fight back.

"Butchers have been trying to absorb rising costs," says AMIC's SA Retail Council chairman Trevor Hill.

"The wholesale price of beef is now \$4.20/kg and it's knocking on the door of going up to \$5/kg. Once it hits \$5/kg, butchers will have to put prices up.

"We've enjoyed low commodity prices for years; the new prices recognise the cost to farmers of producing meat.

"The English wholesale price of beef is about double to here – the equivalent of about \$8.50/kg. We might go to about \$6/kg.

"Butchers need to plan strategies for

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Local rewards

Sourcing prime Adelaide Hills beef directly from local farmers has Stirling butcher Chris Pfitzner well placed to "ride out" rising prices.

Chris is presently paying farmers \$3.50/kg for beef - up from \$3.10/kg before Christmas and about \$1/kg cheaper than he'd pay wholesale.

"Offering prime local beef is a huge selling point. I don't plan to raise prices but if I did, it wouldn't markedly change our sales."

A feature on Stirling Variety Meats is on pages 6 and 7.



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FRESH CREATIVITY

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porterhouse going up to \$40kg retail and rump reaching \$36kg.

"They might, for example, look at buying cheaper meat and ageing it longer.

"Ageing is big in Europe but not fully tapped in Australia."

Trevor says supermarkets will be challenged "to get the same quality of meat at prices they are now getting."

"The gap between supermarkets and butchers will close. There won't be any cheap meat around for supermarkets to source," he says.

"Supermarkets will further manipulate the price grid to get cheaper beef but not necessarily better quality."

Country butchers who buy directly from local farmers are

generally better placed to absorb price rises as there's no middleman factor.

"It gives us more leverage because we're coming from a lower price point," says Craig Maidment, of Maidments Meat Service, Strathalbyn.

"All our beef and lamb comes from local Fleurieu farmers direct; there are enough locals to supply us without the middleman, now there are no longer saleyards here in Strathalbyn.

"Stock agents don't like it but they were the first to go out and sell online. This took stock out of the market and forced up prices.

"With Free Trade Agreements, a lot of meat will be going overseas to places like China.

"Prices are going up already and we might get to the stage where many Australians won't be able to afford prime cuts as much.

"Butchers will have to get more

creative at the lower end. We're already seeing it with sausages, partly as a result of Sausage King."

Trevor Hill says higher prices will force butchers to give more thought to the marketing of beef and lamb.

"We need to rethink the way we communicate with customers," he says.

"This can be as simple as putting a total price on a leg of lamb rather than relying on the traditional price per kilogram, making it more relevant.

"You could cut porterhouse into meal-sized portions – customers can better relate to \$8 a serve rather than \$40kg.

"Butchers can ask customers how much they want to spend per serve. If they say \$5, you might recommend marinated steak."

Trevor says butchers could consider using "two for" marketing as used by supermarkets.

"For example, you might put mince at \$26 for 2kg. People tend to think: that's \$13kg, that's not too bad," he says.

Trevor says top end sales may drop, and demand for sausages and burgers may rise.

"But consumers are too sophisticated to drop the top end. They'll still buy, even if it's in smaller amounts," he says.

"They'll be smarter, using the top end in smarter ways. For a barbecue, they may cut porterhouse into smaller fingers and use extra sausages and burgers."

AMIC's national Retail Council chairman, Brisbane butcher Ray Kelso, says butchers will need to do more value adding.

"Butchers will move some things around and perhaps concentrate more on other products," Ray says.

"But while beef and lamb are at their highest prices, pork has not come down in two years and chicken is on the way up."

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Chicken sales to double beef

Australians will eat an average of 50kg of chicken a year by 2020, says a federal report.

By then, beef consumption will have dwindled to 25kg – down from a high of almost 70kg in 1977.

Lamb sales have also greatly dwindled over the years, as sales of cheaper chicken surged.

Australia is already the world's third largest consumer of chicken after Malaysia and Jamaica.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource

Economics (ABARE) forecasts chicken to increasingly continue as the most consumed meat.

Australia's chicken consumption has risen from just 4.4kg per person in 1960 to a forecast 49.2kg in 2020.

Beef consumption has fallen from a high of 69.4kg per person in 1977 to a forecast 25.3kg per person in 2020 as overseas demand rises.

Similarly, sheep meat consumption has dropped from 44kg per person in 1971 to 9.2kg as the national flock dwindles.

Pork consumption is also on the rise, jumping from 8.3kg per person in 1960 to 26.2kg this year.

ABARE says chicken was on average 50% cheaper than pork, 59% cheaper than lamb and 65% cheaper than beef in the past five years.

Consumers are increasingly choosing fresh chicken over frozen or processed chicken.

While sales of whole chickens remain strong, consumers increasingly prefer to buy chicken pieces, ABARE says.

Gerald Thomson's first job was jogging the streets of Elizabeth behind smelly garbage trucks, hoisting the heavy contents of metal bins into the back.

A recent job – as a senior CFS volunteer - was in the national spotlight, giving the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, a tour of the devastating Sampson Flat bushfire zone.

In between, Gerald has grown his mettwurst business, Kalleske Meats at Smithfield, into a strong supplier to Coles, Woolworths and Foodland.

He has risen to the top from humble beginnings, arriving in Elizabeth in 1967 as a toddler in a large family of “10-pound Pom” migrants from Liverpool.

“I grew up in Elizabeth, my first job was as running after garbage trucks here and I still live here, even though I could live anywhere I want,” says Gerald, 53.

Community-minded, Gerald has been a CFS volunteer for the past 33 years, his experience leading to important leadership roles as an Incident Commander and Operations Officer.

He is a member of a State Response Team that can be called to major bushfires anywhere in Australia.

In 2011, he was awarded the highest honour for firefighters, the Australian Fire Service Medal, for serving “with distinction over many years.”

Gerald has fought major bushfires, including the Canberra fire of 2003, the Eyre Peninsula fire of 2005 and Victoria's Black Saturday fires of 2009.

Unlike those bushfires, no lives were lost in January's Sampson Flat fire that destroyed 26 houses and burnt 1,200ha of scrub and farmland.

“The fact that no lives were lost and there were no major injuries can be put down to the community responding well to early alerts,” Gerald says.

“While 26 houses were lost, there was the potential for 1,200 to be lost.”



Gerald rises to the top

Gerald, highly knowledgeable but with a relaxed manner, was chosen to guide Tony Abbott around the fire zone for the media.

The pair was shown prominently



‘I told him not to slip (going downhill) because we’d have the piss taken out of us’ – Gerald Thomson on his walk with the PM

in newspapers and on TV around Australia – two men in a charred wasteland.

“He’s a nice bloke. I told him a little about the fire and how we had good support from councils

and federally,” Gerald says.

“As a volunteer firefighter of 10 years, he knew what we had gone through.”

Asked what the pair was chuck-

Kalleske Meats, which has eight fulltime staff.

“I like to treat my people as I like to be treated,” he says.

“You need to let your people grow. If you ask them to do something, let them do it in their own way – as long as you get the (right) outcome.

“Young people have new ideas – challenging them is good. I’ve always loved to be challenged...”

Kalleske, with roots in the Barossa Valley in the 1920s, produces up to 12 tonnes of mettwurst products weekly.

Most goes to SA and NT supermarkets.

Gerald says he “buys everything” from MBL.

He bought the business 23 years ago and it faced ruin after the Garibaldi affair of 1995. Custom dropped by 90% overnight.

“I mortgaged my house. We had good products and we stuck to it,” he says.

“We ended up redeveloping the plant, adding three more buildings, and streamlining operations.

“You need to keep reinvesting in your company for longevity.”

ling about in photos, Gerald says, “I told him not to slip (going downhill) because we’d have the piss taken out of us.”

Gerald says he uses CFS leadership skills in the running of

Slape's anniversary gold

New Gourmet Gold range enjoys immediate success

Strong sales of a new range of gourmet sausages in innovative gold trays is under-scoring Slape & Sons' golden 50th anniversary.

From small beginnings, butcher Robbie Slape became a specialist sausage maker in 1965, starting a family business which has spread from Adelaide's northeast across Australia.

His sons Paul, 53, and Philip, 51, keep taking the business to new levels as joint Managing Directors, with production soaring to 1.5 million sausages in peak weeks.



Founder Robbie Slape (right) with sons Paul (left) and Philip.

Des Waters is celebrating 30 years at his Kadina shop, which has become an "institution" on Yorke Peninsula.

The corner shop first opened in 1861 when Kadina was still a settlement. Another year was to pass before it became a town.

Local historians believe it is the oldest continuously trading butcher shop in SA and possibly the oldest in Australia.

Des, 58, says it "seems like yesterday" when he took over in 1985 and re-named the shop Desmond's Meat Service.

He began with just his wife Anne and one casual, and the business has just kept growing.

All Slape products are gluten free.

A third generation is now involved. Paul's daughter, Vanessa, 20, and Philip's son, Lachlan, 18, are learning the business from the ground up.

"Reaching 50 years as an expanding family business is a real achievement. Dad would be very proud of the milestone," Paul says. (Robbie passed away in 2011, aged 72).

Putting the icing on the 50-year cake is the success of the new Gourmet Gold range, which "took off" when launched in SA and Victorian supermarkets last December.

The range of six was then introduced into NSW and Queensland. Again, sales success has been swift, exceeding initial expectations.

The six varieties are made up of two of Slape's proven sellers and four new additions, selected after market research.

Spanish Chorizo and Fresh Cheese Kransky were mainstays of Slape's old gourmet range. "We've made some slight modifications to make them even better now," Philip says.

Italian Casalinga was added to the new range after winning a metropolitan Sausage King title last year. It "selected itself" in the Gourmet Gold lineup.

The other new varieties are Pork & Apple; Chicken, Sundried Tomato & Basil; and Italian Chicken.

Philip says two of the newcomers - Pork & Apple, and Chicken, Sundried Tomato & Basil - are the biggest Gourmet Gold sellers, followed by Italian Casalinga.

"Pork & Apple is proving to be the most popular. It has a distinct flavour, with the apple appealing to people who like sweetness," he says.

"It took us some time to get Pork & Apple perfect - to get it to taste the way we envisaged.

"While we're happy with the Gourmet Gold range, it may evolve as consumer tastes evolve. This could mean looking at introducing a beef variety..."

Slape wanted distinctive packing for the new range and decided on gold trays, but implementation initially proved frustrating.

"The first batch of trays from the Chinese manufacturer was olive green rather than gold so we rejected them," Paul says.

"It was a long job to achieve the colour we wanted and the launch of Gourmet Gold was delayed for 12 months.

"We were concerned at the launch



HAPPY 30TH ANNIVERSARY, DES



Sausage King and has a record of training young people to high standards.

His "pupils" include Chris May, who worked for Des for 11 years before opening his own successful shop, May's Meats, also in Kadina.

Des, who was born and raised at nearby Moonta, originally wanted to be a chef in the Navy but to do so, he needed butchery skills.

Priding himself on hard work and traditional values, Des has built a high reputation for quality meat, much of which

comes from his own small abattoir on the town's outskirts.

He has enjoyed success in

So he took up an apprenticeship in Kadina, enjoyed the work and decided to stay in the meat game.



As good as gold... strong sales of the Gourmet Gold range has Philip (left) and Paul Slape all smiles.

> falling in early December when shelves were crowded due to Christmas hams, but the new range immediately sold well."

Paul says the full Slape range of more than 25 gluten free products has been modified over the years as tastes change.

A case in point was the decision to axe old-style Epping sausages - a mix of pork and beef, mild tasting with little spice.

"The Epping was an important part of Dad's range and it was a big seller for decades but sales fell and it lingered," Paul says.

"It was mild and consumer tastes had moved on, so last year we dropped it. It was a sad day, in light of the role it played in the history of the business."

Robbie Slape initially began with steak sausages, followed by a country style with herbs. He then became one of the first to make beef, tomato and onion sausages.

Paul says, "We are still using Dad's recipes from years ago for our pork, barbecue, steak and country style sausages, but some flavour profiles have fallen by the wayside.

"If something isn't selling so well, customers ask what else we have. It is up to us to come up with different products.

"We're having success with Chicken, Chilli, Lime and Ginger which we released early last year. It has been a ripper.

"We sometimes meet requests - we've just developed some venison sausages for a

venison producer who supplies restaurants."

Philip says, "From time to time, we have had one-off trials such as crocodile sausages with lemon, myrtle and ginger, and we once made camel sausages and burgers for the Camel Cup at Alice Springs."

The Slape story began in 1952 when Robbie began an apprenticeship at a Kensington shop. He went on to have his own small shops at Beulah Park and then St Peters.

Philip says, "A butcher friend went on holidays so Dad made sausages for him.

"When the butcher returned, customers kept telling him the sausages were not as good as in previous weeks so he got Dad to make all his sausages.

"Before he knew it, Dad was making sausages for a half a dozen shops and in 1965 decided to specialise in sausages."

Robbie Slape Sausages expanded to Tranmere and then to Newton, with Paul and Philip joining in the early 1980s, with the business being renamed Slape & Sons.

Production topped one million sausages weekly in 2011, resulting in expansion of the Newton factory for larger production, packing, working and cold storage areas.

Sausages for all of Australia, except WA and Tasmania, are made at Newton. Slape & Sons has a Brisbane depot and office to service northern NSW and Queensland.

"While our production increases year on

year by about 10%, we pride ourselves on staying true to our original methods of production," Paul says.

"To this end, we still use traditional mincers rather than emulsifiers to produce a consistent, coarse cut, quality product."

Slape has long supported sporting clubs and community groups by supplying sausages for sausage sizzles.

Staff noticed a regular at the factory shop was Sharon Hazelwood, who it turns out has held some 60 sausage sizzles to help fund her son Todd's motor racing.

Todd, 19, drives a Ford in the Dunlop development series which is one rung under the popular V8s.

On hearing the story, Slape provided sausages and then upped its support by sponsoring Todd's car for the Clipsal 500 event in March.

The Slape & Sons logo was plastered all over the car's bonnet.



Todd Hazelwood with his Ford sporting the Slape & Sons logo.

BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

Adelaide Hills butcher Chris Pfitzner takes pride in running a traditional shop – even though its “all black” look seems anything but traditional at first glance.

His new shop is designer chic, turning the heads of passersby in Stirling Mall with its striking black tiles, strategic downlights and “clean, simple” look.

Loosely designed on a butchery in Barcelona, the shop has dramatically grabbed the attention of food-savvy Hills folk since its opening last October, with turnover surging.

“It has just gone crazy,” says Chris, 36, who upgraded Stirling Variety Meats from a smaller shop at one end of the mall to a central double shop opposite Woolworths.

“We’ve attracted about 300 new customers as well as keeping our old ones. Our turnover has risen by more than 20% - and that’s being conservative.

“Our Christmas turnover was like a dream come true. Since then, we’ve been battling to keep up. It has been fantastic.

“As well as attracting new customers, the new shop gives us the opportunity to better showcase ideas and products.”

Another MBL Member, seafood company Angelakis Bros, opened a few doors away in December, adding to the refurbished mall’s protein offering.

Chris describes his shop as “traditional,” offering quality local meat and his own smallgoods backed by good old fashioned service and expert advice.

“The mainstay of the business is local Adelaide Hills beef, grass fed and available year round,” says Chris, who employs eight fulltime butchers and two casuals.

“We state the origin of the beef – the closest town. We know its age and the

Sales surge as Chris combines tradition with designer chic



property it came from. We know the farmers.

“All our spring lamb also comes from the Hills... people respond massively to this local supply.

“Our suppliers also appreciate how we handle their meat. A Mylor woman who breeds cattle has sent five of her neighbours to us as new regular customers.”

Chris is a Hills “boy” through and through. He grew up in Hahndorf and now lives in Mt Barker with wife Giselle, who is active in the business, and their children aged 8, 6 and 4.

He did his apprenticeship with Allan Bennett at the Chop Shop, Mt Barker, and after a year working in Alice Springs and Darwin, he joined Barry Nichols at Stirling Variety Meats.

He spent two years as shop manager and four years as a business partner before buying the business outright in 2008.

The business grew year by year, and the 66 square metre shop became too small.

“We simply outgrew it. With eight fulltime staff working there, it was a squeeze. It also needed a new fitout as everything was getting past its use-by date,” Chris says.

“We had the opportunity to move up to the centre of the mall in a space twice as big and fit it out as a new shop.

“We could afford the extra rent, so we went for it.”

Chris engaged a designer who produced a design based on internet photos of a Barcelona shop which has a distinctive wall mounted cow, made of piping.

The design also included “windows” for customers to see butchers working out back and hanging carcasses of beef - as points of difference to the supermarket across the mall.

“We lost only two days’ business for the shop transfer, opening the new one on October 1 – and then it went crazy,” Chris says.

“We picked up new customers and we were run off our feet. Almost immediately, our sales were up by more than 20%.

“Our faces, products and service hadn’t changed, so the sales increase came down to a better looking shop in a better location. ➤



Giselle Pfitzner's popular Pepperpot handmade sauces.



Traditional look... customers can see hanging meat out back.



➤ “You pay more rent for a better location with better exposure but I regard the extra cost as advertising.”

Chris says designing a new shop had been on his mind for 10 years. “Everywhere I went, including on holidays, I’d look at shops,” he says.

“Our new shop is clean and simple – it looks neat, with no posters,” he says.

Giselle says, “The black tiles are really striking – we didn’t want a standard shop.

“Customers like being able to see through to the meat hanging and the guys boning out.”

Chris says, “Some customers linger just to look out the back. Seeing real butchers at work instils trust.

“It’s also good for the staff... they work

‘We picked up new customers and we were run off our feet. Almost immediately, our sales were up by more than 20%’ – Chris Pfitzner

cleaner, working a bit smarter and neater.

“In the last decade, I’ve noticed more respect for butchers’ skills and knowledge. I attribute it to TV cooking shows telling people to talk with their local butcher.”

Giselle has added a new local touch with her handmade range of tomato, barbecue and plum sauces and tomato chutney under her Pepperpot label.

“I started using tomatoes from our garden for sauce and chutney, just for us. Then friends and relatives said I should sell them in the shop to accompany our meat,” she says.

“They have sold better than I expected – about 200 jars in three months. Heaps of people bought them for Christmas hampers.

“Two businesses have suggested selling them in their shops but we want to keep it exclusive and I’ll be experimenting with new recipes.”

Chris is a big believer in “giving back” to the community through a long list of sponsorships of sporting and community clubs.

“We’re local people selling local meat and supporting the local community,” he says.

“I’ve worked and lived in the Hills all my life. I’d say 80% of customers know I’m the owner of the shop and it counts for a lot.

“The landlord wants to make this mall a food hub for the Hills. Angelakis and a large fruit and vegetable shop are already here with us, along with Woolworths and a Cibo cafe.

“So all in all, the future looks pretty good.”

MBL will continue to help Chris advance.

“I’m a 100% MBL customer. I like dealing with one supplier and MBL has everything we want,” he says.



Colin Lindner and his 44-year “apprenticeship” For the goodness of meat

For over 40 years, Colin Lindner has been the face of one of Renmark’s foremost butcheries.

Lindner Meats, a traditional country butchery, is a destination for serious meat lovers, with the apt motto, *For The Goodness of Meat*.

Nobody takes the meat game more seriously than Colin – but he can’t help smiling when asked about his apprenticeship.

He is amused at the thought of his apprenticeship spanning 44 years. “I started it at age 34, I didn’t get around to finishing it – and I definitely never will,” says Colin, 81.

“I worked behind the counter – always a shopman, never a butcher. I could do some things but I relied on the trade skills of other men and their loyalty.”

The circumstances of him entering the meat game in his 30s are entwined in his family’s history of butchering in the Barossa and the Riverland.

Colin’s father Dick, whose father Jack was a Barossa butcher, began his business in Tanunda around 1930, wholesaling small-goods to grocery chain WO Beilby & Son.

Dick later supplied carcasses to his brother Bert’s shop, Renmark Meat House. Dick



Colin Lindner... “today’s butchers would raise their eyebrows at yesteryear’s practices.”

then purchased this shop, moving his family with four young boys to the Riverland in 1938.

“The war years - with their manpower shortages, meat coupons and petrol rationing - took their toll on Dad’s interest in butchering,” Colin says.

“He followed the post-war wool boom and ended up with 10,000 acres of picturesque land on a bend of the River Murray, 11km upstream from Renmark near Paringa.

“My early years were spent land clearing, fencing and endless hours behind sheep – from Loxton market to Paringa, from paddock to shearing shed...to and fro almost all year round.

“We ran a slaughterhouse which supplied the shop. The slaughterhouse still operates. It is fully accredited and adequate for our needs.

“But going back, along came the record 1956 flood followed by the

MBL to the rescue at record flood of 1956

Colin Lindner well remembers the record River Murray flood of 1956 which extensively damaged Renmark and other towns along the river.

“I was 23 then and I remember the water rising. People came up (from Adelaide) to sandbag with shovels. Little Fergie tractors were used to make levees,” he says.

“We had a big old shop back then with 14-foot ceilings. We had to pump water out of the cellar but the force buckled the big stone walls.”

As rising floodwaters threatened in August 1956, MBL’s country rep Jim Coles left Adelaide for the Riverland in a Kombi van which was designed as a mobile shop.

But instead of carrying merchandise, the van had been stripped of its cargo at the last minute and reloaded with hundreds of bags.

The photo here, from MBL’s centenary book, shows Dick Hellyer (left) and Jim Coles loading bags into the van for the run to Renmark.



MBL’s timely gift was gratefully received by Renmark folk, who filled the bags with sand to build more levees.

Jim stayed in Renmark all week working on the levees, keeping

in touch with MBL Members during his breaks.

Local historians credit the levees, built by locals and volunteers from far afield, for saving Renmark from ruin.



From Colin Lindner's family archives comes this captivating photo taken, he believes, around 1920 or a few years earlier at Schulz's, Tanunda. Butchers, with the trademark moustaches

of the era, gather in front of cutting carts which travelled the Barossa. Colin believes his grandfather Jack is pictured third from the left. Note the spotless garb and shiny shoes.

➤ collapse of the wool price and then the 1962 credit squeeze.

"The boom years were over, so in 1967 Dad said to me, 'Colin, I think you'd better go into the shop.'

"So, at 34, it was a big change from farm work to being in a butcher's shop."

Colin worked there for more than 40 years, being forced to retire four years ago after a stroke. He now "pays the bills and wages" from home.

For more than 60 years, Colin has been an organist and choir master at his local Lutheran church and is a keen tennis player.

He has seen many changes to retail butchery over four decades, saying today's butchers would raise their eyebrows at some of yesteryear's practices.

"Butchering was hectic. There were no window or counter displays and everything was cut out back on demand," he says.

"To get two pound of chops very often required the break-up of a whole carcass.

"It was messy – you'd hardly have time to

get back and tidy up before the next customer.

"Cold meat was very big – hams, bacon and full range of smallgoods which were the value added backbone of the industry.

"We were always busy. When not serving, we were preparing orders for home delivery.

"We had two separate delivery rounds, twice a week, to the Irrigation Settlement with 90 to 100 customers."

Colin says conditions greatly improved in 1978 with the shift into new, bigger premises which continue to be used.

"A former MBL employee Peter Williams advised on the setting up of the new shop with more modern equipment from stainless steel benches to cold plates and counter displays," he says.

"It took a while to gain the confidence of customers to buy meat already cut and displayed before them.

"Sliding rails were a boon – no more man-handling quarters of beef and lamb carcasses into and off the truck.

"Later, power winches and band saws also made big differences – and refrigerated cabinets were revolutionary.

"For years, cold plates served us well but then they no longer met meat hygiene standards and so in 2000 we installed refrigerated meat cabinets.

"These were also a boon. Products could remain in the cabinet overnight instead of being returned to the chiller and being brought back next morning."

Colin says he admires today's skilled and innovative butchers with their new products, ready meals and outreach to new custom.

He says MBL has been a trusted supplier of merchandise and machinery "over all these years."

"We today purchase over \$2,000 of merchandise a month from MBL as well as machinery, including vacuum packers and mixer grinders, on very generous credit terms," he says.

"MBL is a good business with a long history. I can only put it down to good management for there are very few co-operatives left."

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Spreading the News

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useful information from the latest industry news, trends and tips to profiles on achievers and businesses big and small.

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for possible inclusion in your magazine. If you have a good story to tell, please let us know.

Editor Peter Morgan is reached direct on 0410 633 414 or at peter.morgan@internode.on.net

Keep it simple, says Shaun

Fresh from national Sausage King success, country butcher Shaun Watson is a firm believer in the KISS principal of keeping it simple.

Shaun, 36, became the toast of Naracoorte for winning the prestigious Traditional Australian crown at the national final in Adelaide.

His winning gluten free barbecue sausages are a mix of beef and lamb with a light seasoning.

Shaun capped a fantastic night by taking second place in the Australian Lamb section for his lamb with feta and spinach sausages.

He sources lamb from his own farm and two others near Naracoorte.

"The more you enter these competitions but don't quite get across the line, you make it slightly better and keep experimenting," Shaun says.

"I now believe that you don't want to overdo the ingredients... less is best.

"Unless you're doing something spicy, you just want a hint of the flavour you want to put across.

"You don't want too much going on because from a customer viewpoint, texture and taste are the main things."

Shaun, of Tender Cuts, and offsidiers Neil Smith and Trevor Sayers have been run off their feet after Sausage King success.

In the first month, they were churning out at least 300kg - and up to 400kg - of the winning barbecue sausages weekly.

"It was so busy, I lost track of sales for a while," says Shaun, whose business was profiled in MBL News last October.

"In one week, our Facebook page had 11,500 views which is a record. It's just been massive..."



Shaun Watson, with his wife Sophie, after being crowned national Sausage King.

"For the last four or five months, each month's trade has been better than the previous year's month."

Shaun's success meant SA has won the national Traditional Australian crown for the past five years.

Anthony Skara, of Skara Artisan Smallgoods, triumphed last year after Clare's Jason Mathie won with his saltbush hogget sausages for three successive years.

Two other SA butchers were among the national placegetters this year.

Trevor Hill, of Bruce's Meats, took third place in Poultry, for the second successive year, for his Italian with fennel sausages.

Franz Knoll, of Barossa Fine Foods, came second in the Gourmet section for his Mississippi sausages.

Franz also represented in Australian pork with his Cambridge sausages.

Ashley Pheiler, of Hygienic Meats in Loxton, represented SA for the first time, impressing in Continental with his Italian sausage of pork, fennel, chilli, paprika, salt and wine.

In the National Apprentice Competition, SA was well represented by Robert Smallman, 19, of Glenunga Gourmet Meats.

Baa Moo Oink, at Kidman Park, represented in the Best Butchers Burger competition with its pale ale burger.

Kathleen Dickinson says there's hardly a quiet moment in the MBL shop and showroom at Athol Park, especially at present during sausage season.

For decades, home sausage makers – many of them with Italian or Greek heritage – have relied on MBL for supplies of everything from skins and casings to string, pepper and chilli.

“About the only thing most don't buy is premix,” says Kathleen, who orchestrates the shop as well as helping with phone orders.

“They like to combine ingredients according to old family recipes, some of which have been handed down through the generations.”

Sausage season traditionally spans the cooler months, with May and June usually the busiest, but some sausage makers this year began visiting MBL as early as late February.

“A lot of people come through the shop during the sausage season – it gets so busy, we jokingly call it the silly season,” says Kathleen.

“This is my third sausage season. I found the first one pretty daunting but I've learnt from experience and I now know a lot more.

“You get asked a lot of questions – even people who have been making sausages for 40 years can be unsure of exactly what they want; others often need reassurance.”

Kathleen, 43, who has spent all her working life in the food industry, has been with MBL for two years.

She worked in a Coles service deli for 10 years, followed by time serving in a fruit shop with a continental deli and in the old Standom Smallgoods shop at Hendon.

She then spent four years at Gawler River Cattle Co, starting in a butchery before moving to invoicing and then gaining Quality Assurance experience.

“It was time for a change and MBL has worked out very well for me. I've been in the shop here at Athol Park since it opened two years ago,” Kathleen says.

“I've always liked serving customers. You get to know the regulars and can have good conversations.”

While the MBL shop serves Members and account customers, Kathleen says there are increasing numbers of customers from off the street.

“A lot of people come in here thinking we're a butcher shop and end up buying things

“Meat the Team”

Profiles on MBL staff members



like foil, cling wrap, bags and bowls,” she says.

“A big sales area is knives and things to sharpen knives. I thought I had good knives until I bought great ones from here...”

“Most people are surprised at our wide range, often saying they will come back when they have time to browse. We get much word of mouth business.”

As well as the Italian and Greek sausage makers, the MBL shop attracts diverse nationalities, due in part to its western suburbs location.

“We get Asians and Africans, people from the Middle East... people from everywhere. They are friendly people,” Kathleen says.

“Some come in for specific items. For example, Asian chicken boners come in for knives and knife sharpeners.”

Kathleen says the diversity of customers is one reason she hopes to work at MBL for the long term.

“I've never worked at a place that is so team oriented. MBL looks after staff... it's simply a good place to work,” she says.

Away from work, Kathleen's life revolves around her sons Robert, 22, and Jake, 18, and her partner, Wally.

“We enjoy fishing, taking our trailer boat to a fishing ground 25km off Semaphore... it's beautiful out there on a summer's night,” she says.

Q & A

Do you have a special interest or hobby? I love going through old buildings and doing ghost tours - I find them fascinating. I also love spending peaceful time in my garden.

What would you do with a spare \$50,000? I'd go on a scenic river cruise through Europe. I'd love seeing the beautiful old buildings and castles.

If you were a car, what would you be? I'd be a new Clubsport Commodore.

What food can't you live without? Pasta – I absolutely love it in any way, shape or form.

If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would it be? It's a toss-up... I'd love to meet Elvis; living in his 50s era would have been awesome, and I'd also love to meet Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour and have him strum me some tunes.

What's the best thing about working at MBL? The great bunch of people here. Even when there are stressful days, someone will put a smile on my face!

Panko crumbs raise the bar

Japanese-style panko breadcrumbs can take schnitzel and other crumbed products to the next level, enhancing butchers' value-added range.

MBL believes panko is superior to traditional breadcrumbs, giving a crispier, more delicate finish.

With butchers increasingly asking about panko, MBL is currently offering promotional specials through our reps.

"Panko is simply a superior product," says MBL's Operations, Business Development Manager Bexley Carman.

"The panko crumbs have a slivered shape and an open structure which produces a delicate, crispy taste.

"They have good flavour and eye appeal. They come in orange, yellow and white.

"Butchers have been asking about panko after seeing it in some supermarkets, so we're currently having a promotion and have some specials going.

"We've had good response from butchers."

Some butchers opt to first use MBL high yield batter mix (product code 349381) before applying panko, to help crumb adhesion and add weight.

MBL constantly monitors trends and liaises with suppliers about new and improved products which can benefit butchers and other customers.

Newly Weds Foods, based in Sydney, is Australia's only maker of traditional Japanese panko breadcrumbs.

Bexley says panko has a big future in SA because of our love of crumbed foods.

"Breadcrumbs is one of MBL's highest selling categories," he says.

"SA is sometimes referred to as the schnitzel capital, with good reason.

"Schnitzel is a traditional pub favourite; many pubs have schnitzel nights."



MBL'S PANKO PRODUCT CODES		All come in 10kg bags	
Yellow	191526	White	190363
Orient Orange	190868	Orange Coarse	191502

Internet searches show three Adelaide-based sites for schnitzel lovers, with posts for all things schnitzel including pub reviews.

Newly Weds says panko is produced from selected quality wheat flours using innovative baking technology.

It is made from crustless bread, which is achieved by passing an electric current through the dough.

"Panko has a crisper, airier

texture and resists absorbing oil when fried, resulting in a lighter coating," Newly Weds says.

"Compared to traditional breadcrumbs, panko not only provides textural advantages but is more resilient to breakdown during processing.

"It also has a higher tolerance to browning during frying.

"It is available in a variety of colours and a variety of textures from light and crispy, to hard and crunchy."

New multi-use, GF marinade

MBL has a new barbecue rib marinade which can be used for multiple products, including lamb shanks and pulled chicken.

The new, smoky glaze is cheaper than the



barbecue rib marinade MBL has been selling for years, and it is also gluten free.

"It is becoming a big seller," says MBL's Operations, Business Development Manager Bexley Carman.

"We've long provided a barbecue rib marinade, with butchers mainly using it for marinated steak.

"We're now pleased to offer a new barbecue rib marinade with the multiple advantages of being cheaper, gluten free and suitable for making more than one product.

"Using the one ingredient can also simplify ordering and helps butchers with stock rotation and freshness."

MBL product codes BBQ Rib Marinade GF: 8kg - 542441 20kg - 542458



The new marinade is made by Newly Weds Foods, which featured it and other products in a recent tasting presentation for MBL.

Newly Weds' chef used the marinade for lamb shanks and pulled chicken rolls (see photos).

But there are plenty of options, including pulled pork.