

# RAISING THE BAR

The new Master Butcher program has huge potential to raise public recognition of butchers as valued and highly skilled tradesmen.

Just as the title Master of Wine brings instant respect, a new wave of Master Butchers can secure butchers as kingpins of the ever-growing "foodie set."

With retail butchery attaining loftier status, more talented young people could be attracted and recruited - bringing new ideas and ambitions to continually refresh the industry.

Simultaneously, the Master Butcher program has the potential to raise the self-image of some butchers who, feeling undervalued, can battle to see a long term career path.

Exciting possibilities emerged with the announcement of the first three Master Butcher "graduates" - Franz Knoll, Wilson Lowe and Paul Suleyman - at AMIC's Awards for Excellence night.

## Master Butcher lifts butchers' status as multi-skilled experts

Wonderful ambassadors for the industry, the trio passionately believe that the establishment of Master Butcher is a landmark advance for retail butchery.

AMIC says the announcement has already generated keen interest among butchers wanting to take their skills to a higher level.

The program is designed to help butchers identify any skills shortages and "fill the gaps" with the aid of an assessment panel.

At a time when supermarkets are

withdrawing butchers from supermarkets, the Master Butcher program can help butchers to further raise the bar as skilled fresh meat specialists who offer personal service and advice.

AMIC SA's Paul Sandercock has been developing the national program since 2008, and the SA trio are the first in Australia to "graduate."

"The idea is to recognise skills, knowledge

*Continued page 6*



Looking resplendent in their new Master Butcher jackets are (from left) Wilson Lowe, Paul Suleyman and Franz Knoll.

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are advised that the date for holding the 2016 Annual General Meeting has been fixed at **6.00pm on Monday, November 7, 2016**

Please note that the venue of this year's Annual General Meeting will be at the Master Butchers Co-operative Ltd's office at

**203 - 215 Hanson Rd, Athol Park.**

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## MBL NEWS

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# MBL is meeting the challenges of changing business conditions

## It's rebate time again!

After a reasonable year, MBL's books have been finalised and the annual rebate was paid September 30. Most members will receive a similar rebate to last year.

"As all of our Members are well aware, trading conditions were again tough over the year, particularly in rendering," says CEO Warren McLean.

"Large volumes of protein meals and reduced demand for tallow to make bio-diesel affected prices of our products.

"The Wingfield rendering division is significantly down on the previous year as a result of these lower commodities prices for our products.

"Our Merchandise division increased sales by 8.4%, with the Machinery division showing an improvement of 2%.

"We have maintained prices where possible and the increased sales came from new product lines and new customers, to give our Members the best possible purchasing power.

"We are continually seeking new markets for our niche products."

Warren says MBL continues to find efficiencies in warehousing and distribution, and in the recycling of renderable products.

Further investment in the rendering divisions will enhance returns to members in future.

"MBL is well placed to face the future years with confidence," he says.

The Board and staff of MBL would like to thank Members for supporting your Co-operative.

## Pink Butcher's good response

The first Pink Butcher charity promotion is well under way, with organisers pleased by the response.

Butchers are turning their shops – and themselves – pink in the month of October, with 150 starter promotional kits sent to butcher shops across SA.

MBL has lent support by subsidising specially-made pink caps and aprons for participating butcher shops.

AMIC was confident there would be a "good uptake" among butchers.

"It's where it needs to be - I'm happy," said AMIC's Paul Sandercok when MBL News went to Press in late September.

"Pink Butcher is an exciting concept and an excellent opportunity for butcher shops to demonstrate their important connections to local communities.

"I've been doing the rounds talking with butchers and a

number of them were well advanced and really getting into it.

"Seaford Gourmet Meats has ordered 65 pink caps and 65 pink aprons, and Windsor Meats got extra pink balloons.

"Tony Marschall from TJ's Pirie Gourmet Meats in Port Pirie has



also been incredibly busy."

Pink Butcher is linked to Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) which is one of four breast cancer charities operating in Australia.

Butchers registered for Pink Butcher directly with BCNA which forwarded starter kits including a collection tin,

posters and promotional paraphernalia.

"Promotional and supporting material, including collection tins, were given to butchers, so it has been a relatively easy promotion," Paul says.

"We expect the uptake to grow year by year. Victoria is doing it this year and Tasmania will follow in 2017.

"I'm pretty confident other States will come on board to make it a national competition."

BCNA spokesman Marita O'Keefe says her group is thrilled to work with butchers.

"The campaign is creating a really powerful connection between business and the community, bringing everyone together to support a cause that is close to so many," she says.

"Nearly 16,000 Australians will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, which means many people will know someone affected."

# Uniting young people

Just as the Master Butcher program empowers experienced butchers, young Luke Moody is looking to boost apprentices by forming the Apprentice Butcher Association.

Luke, 22, says an aim of his new group is to help apprentices improve skills and broaden their knowledge through mutual support.

"It's not a union. Rather, it's an association of young butchers who can support and encourage each other to develop and advance," he says.

"It's about networking and lifting the profile of the industry."

MBL, AMIC and training organisations are lending support, mainly to help spread news of the association's creation.

SA had 192 apprentice butchers in June, 2016, according to the Department of State Development, but apprentice numbers are falling.

The new association will be for young people as a whole – apprentices, newly qualified butchers and school students looking to enter the industry.

As well as "real world" meetings and development nights, the association will have a strong Facebook presence for interaction at any time and to include country apprentices.

"Digital delivery will be vital. We're all time poor but it's easy to communicate on Facebook and by emails," Luke says.

"We will have 'real world' meetings but Facebook will allow people to get to know each other rather than going into a meeting cold.

"Until now, there has been no or little connection between apprentices through the on the job apprenticeship process. You can feel isolated.

"But today thanks to social media, we can easily communicate and, with agreed agendas

and programs, we can help each other."

The online group, established under the Facebook group name @ Apprentice Butchers Association South Australia, should be running within six months."

Luke, who completed his apprenticeship last November, says a change of culture can be implemented into the next generation of the industry.

"A sense of pride and identity can be built into young people, creating higher engagement in industry programs," he says.

"Apprentices can succeed naturally by up-skilling or broadening their scope of knowledge in areas of their

## APPRENTICE BUTCHER ASSOCIATION

personal interest.

"In some cases, it could motivate them to finish their trade."

According to the Department of State Development, the number of apprentice butchers "signing on" has dropped by an average of 17 a year for each of the last five years.

Stats also show that the number completing butchery

apprenticeships is below that of other trades.

An aim of the association is to increase the number of apprentices by encouraging a stronger industry presence in high schools.

Luke addressed AMIC's SA Retail Council which endorsed his idea for a youth association.

Luke says the industry needs to address community perceptions that butchery is a "blood and guts" trade.

"This needs to happen to boost the self-esteem of young people already in the industry and to encourage people to take up apprenticeships," he says.

"This is something that's close to my heart. I respect my skill and my trade – it's a career, not just a job.

"I don't like people seeing me as being in an industry that lacks opportunity. It makes me angry.

"Pathways go beyond shops to areas like export, processing, QA and more.

"Setting up an association for young people is not about me – it's about helping apprentices now that I've qualified.

*\* Young people are invited to attend a meeting of the new association on Friday, October 28, at the Strathmore Hotel, North Tce, Adelaide at 7.30pm. Details from Luke Moody on 0416 480 004.*



Luke Moody... devoting days off to form the apprentice group.

# Macro explores opening kangaroo plant in Europe

Macro Meats is planning to establish a kangaroo meat processing plant in Europe to target the home cooking market.

Founder Ray Borda says he will visit possible sites this month and hopes the value adding plant will be operating in about six months.

He says export regulations require meat to be shipped from Australia in whole pieces, making it less appealing to the overseas cook-at-home market.

"If you've just got lumps of meat or steaks,

sometimes it's a little bit too much when you're trying to introduce kangaroo to people for the first time," he says.

Macro wants its own value adding plant to offer Europeans smaller products such as stir-fry strips, meatballs and burgers.

"That's how people start to buy kangaroo. They progress from there and that's where you get the growth," Ray says.

"Depending on how the European pilot plant works, we hope to end up having plants in Europe, Asia and the Americas.

"It's a big investment and not many Australian companies have ever done what we're looking to do, but we are committed and we're going to give it a go.

"It's ambitious but we think we are sitting on gold.

"Australia is the only place in the world where you can get this product and if we control it and market it, then nobody is going to be able to do it like we do."

Macro will be among 7,000 exhibitors at SIAL Paris - the world's largest food innovation show - on October 16-20 to launch a range of premium kangaroo meat.

After Paris, Ray and other Macro staff will visit several potential sites for a plant in Europe.

Ray commercialised production of kangaroo in the late 1980s and now Macro processes about 10,000 tonnes of it for human consumption in more than 30 countries.

About 75% of production is sold in Australia but Ray is looking to grow sales in Europe, North America and Asia.

He is hopeful of restarting exports to Russia soon, and China, Hong Kong, ➤



Ray Borda... "It's ambitious but we think we are sitting on gold."

## We spend \$46 a week on meat

The average Australian household spends \$46 on 4.5 meat meals cooked weekly at home, according to a new national survey.

The survey concluded that Australia remains a nation of meat lovers, with households spending \$378 million a week on meat.

Chicken was voted by 47% of respondents as their favourite meat, confirming a growing trend. Beef was favoured by 31%, and 14% chose lamb.

Galaxy Research polled 1,000

consumers last June in a survey for supermarket chain Aldi.

Results pointed to an increased willingness to experiment in the kitchen with meat cuts and recipes as flow-on effects of high beef prices.

Alternatives to traditional Aussie favourites like T-bones and rump are becoming more in demand, and it seems older people are the most likely to step outside their comfort zone.

The survey found those aged 50 to 64 were more than twice as likely to experiment with differ-

ent cuts, recipes and convenient products compared to those aged 18 to 34.

About half of those surveyed are likely to use slow cookers for cheaper cuts.

"Australians are looking for better value without having to compromise on quality," a spokesman says.

"They're looking for quality,

affordable and convenient products that are both easy to cook through the week and something special to celebrate with friends and family on the weekend."

Nine out of 10 respondents said buying Australian grown meat is important to them.

One in five said they would spend more on meat if they could afford it.

*\*Beef consumption has dropped by an average of almost 3kg in a year due to record high prices, according the Australian Bureau of Statistics. See the full story, plus Re-thinking Secondary Cuts for the barbecue, on page 12.*



Photo: WOW Creative

➤ Japan and Indonesia are in his sights.

He says the growth in Europe has been driven by chefs who professionally prepare kangaroo.

Moving from success in restaurants to finding a place in retail outlets with everyday kangaroo products such as hamburgers, sausages, meatballs and stir-fry strips has been a key to Macro's success in Australia.

But global growth has been hampered by export rules requiring meat to be shipped from Australia in whole pieces, making it less appealing overseas.

"You've got to start in the restaurants because they know how to cook it properly," Ray says.

"The next stage is allowing the consumer to buy it and that's why we're opening our own value-adding processing plant in Europe.

"We want to be able to do meatballs or burgers or stir fries depending on the country and what they want."

There are an estimated 50 to 60 million kangaroos in Australia, with about 2.5 million commercially harvested a year. Macro is the dominant player.

## 'In Europe, we want to be able to do meatballs or burgers or stir fries depending on the country and what they want' – Ray Borda

Macro's species-specific range is designed to promote greater consistency for consumers and includes the mild tasting Paroo (red kangaroo), medium flavoured Mallee Roo (western grey kangaroo) and the robust Mulga Roo (eastern grey kangaroo).

"Australian consumers want more of a milder kangaroo, whereas Asia, Germany and a few other places like something that's a bit more robust with a little bit of a stronger flavour," Ray says.

"Different meat, of different ages, from different species, out of different areas have different moisture content. It tastes different and it cooks different.

"We're trying to give it consistency."

Ray says kangaroo meat is popular among bodybuilders looking for new sources of protein, as well as diners looking for a new food experience.

"Restaurants around the world just want something different," he says.

"It takes a lot of explaining but we're getting there slowly and it's so exclusive you can only get it from one place in the world.

"Maybe in the early days people did have Skippy Syndrome but now it's changed so much that our biggest week of the year is Australia Day week."

As MBL News reported in June, Macro plans an \$8 million factory expansion at its Athol Park base, where the workforce will double to 500.

"We will initially double production (to about 1,600 tonnes a week) and then treble it within 18 months," Ray says.

"With the latest next generation equipment, our ambition is to eventually raise production five-fold.

"We have been planning our expansion for some time. We're excited by it.

"We're doing all we can to be able to meet demand as it grows domestically and internationally."

# RAISING THE BAR

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and experience beyond standard trade qualification,” he says.

“If the pathway in butchery is to come in as an apprentice, at the other end is to work up to becoming a Master Butcher.

“It provides an extension to Certificate III in Meat Processing (Retail Butcher) and Certificate III in Meat Processing (Smallgoods) and other Certificate IV programs.

“The standards to qualify as a Master Butcher must be high but not impossible to reach.”

Paul says being a Master Butcher is a recognised industry achievement, signifying that the butcher is at the top of his trade.

“It will be vital to ensure the integrity of the program to make sure people are worthy of the title,” he says.

“For the consumer, seeing the Master Butcher logo means something special is happening here in this shop.

“If you’re looking for a plumber to fix your toilet, you tend to be drawn to a master plumber because you’d expect him to do a better job.

“In the same way, a Master Butcher logo will draw people into a shop and it’s then up to the butcher to meet those higher expectations.”

Franz Knoll, of Barossa Fine Foods, says the

program has the dual effect of raising butchers’ skill levels and raising the public profile of the industry.

“It’s recognition, by the time you finish, that you can run a business, and it results in greater public recognition,” he says.

“People may go to local butchers but how do they define who is really good?

“In Germany, master butchers are recognised for understanding products and being a leader in the running of a business.

“They have authority; they are someone to go to for advice.

“This applies in other industries. A Master of Wine is a big deal; chefs with titles have greater public recognition.”

In the meat industry, Franz believes talented and dedicated young people can attain the Master Butcher title in eight years.

“That’s three years of an apprenticeship followed by five years of experience,” he says.

“It’s not about ego or being better than anyone else... I did the program because we all need to keep learning and improving.

“You’d expect people at this (Master Butcher) level to earn more and be an asset anywhere in the industry.

“This (Master Butcher program) can draw people to the top but it needs to be promoted within the industry.”

Wilson Lowe, of Bruce’s Meat, says there



was a gap in butchery training until the Master Butcher program began.

“England has Master Butchers and they are recognised for what they are – skilled in their trade to the highest level. They are respected,” he says.

“Here, we’re not really recognised as a professional industry to the same degree as some other industries are recognised.

“Until now, there has been a gap in attaining a higher level. The Master Butcher program will start to change this.”

Wilson says the development of the Master Butcher program will be seen by future generations as a landmark in the advancement of retail butchery.

“It’s a great legacy,” he says.

Paul Suleyman, of Goodwood Quality Meats, says the program offers a great opportunity, especially for young people, to develop their skills to a high level.

“We start as apprentices and the pathway now continues to the Master Butcher program,” he says.

AMIC has application forms, rules, guidelines and conditions of application. A panel assesses suitable applications, followed by a site visit.

Applicants must detail their qualifications and industry experience, and answer diverse questions in areas including business planning, skill levels, WHS, smallgoods knowledge, marketing and customer service.

*\*Individual profiles of the three new Master Butchers appear over the next three pages.*



New Master Butchers (from left) Franz Knoll, Paul Suleyman and Wilson Lowe.

## Wilson's 'nutty' start

A butcher named Joe Nutt sparked Wilson Lowe's zest for the meat industry as a boy of five growing up in Scotland in the early 1960s.

"Joe Nutt was a local butcher who used to sell meat from one of 10 red Commer vans with replica bullock heads on the roof," recalls Wilson, 57, with a smile.

"I'd do the rounds with Joe in his red van. He'd beep the horn and we'd wind down the windows to shout to customers who'd come out of their houses to buy meat.

"The back of the van was loaded with meat. Joe would open the doors and people, one at a time, would come up a few steps into the back which had a display like a shop.

"Meat was hung from bars and it used to rock wildly when we went around corners. And I can still smell the sawdust on the floor...

"So the meat industry has been in my blood since I was five. I'm still very passionate about what I do and my expectations remain high."

Wilson has carved a distinguished career spanning more than 40 years, including owning and managing shops across Adelaide.

Now a valued senior member of the Bruce's Meat team, he is passionate about mentoring young butchers, having trained dozens over the years.

He began in the meat game in 1974, doing three years at trade school before working in the Mase's Meat Company shop at Mitcham. At 18, he was running the Mase's shop at Christies Beach.

"Just before I finished by apprenticeship, I bought my own shop at Clarence Gardens. It cost me \$5,000 and I had to borrow the lot. I was there for about 18 months," he says.

Wilson later had his own shop at Frewville for 16 years, and managed six shops for Turners.

In 2005, he returned to Mitcham at Bruce's Meat when it was owned by Bruce Berry.

He has remained, helping Trevor Hill



*Butchers making pies? A decade ago, Wilson Lowe was told his idea was silly but he persisted. The oven-ready family pies have proved consistently big sellers for Bruce's Meat, with seven varieties now made, along with smaller ones in ramekins.*

expand with shops at Pasadena, Fairview Park and Stepney.

"My role is to go around all the shops doing mentoring. I enjoy being able to share my knowledge and enthusiasm for butchery," he says.

"It's heart-warming to see young people mature and prosper as butchers.

"Ultimately, I'd like to do training and assessment – I did a course to gain a ticket in lecturing, and I've spent time working with the Meat Studies lecturers at TAFE."

Helping others has always been important to Wilson. Years ago, he left his Frewville shop to study social work for a year at university before returning to butchery.

He was a part-time telephone counsellor for Lifeline, including Crisis Care, doing three shifts a week for six years. It was tough work emotionally, especially when

counselling suicidal people.

On a brighter note, Wilson says a career highlight was being in the Australian team against New Zealand and Britain at the 2013 Tri-Nations Butchers Challenge in Auckland.

"I had the time of my life. I met some fantastic blokes and I still keep in touch with them. I visited some at their shops in England in 2014," he says.

Wilson says he also enjoyed making sausages and doing cooking demonstrations at the AMIC display at the Royal Adelaide Show.

Over the years, he has collected old choppers and handsaws. He prepares food in his home kitchen on an old wooden butcher's block from Kithers at Glenleg.

"I got it for just \$100. It's a big, heavy thing, and it's well worn. You should have seen us trying to lift it into a vehicle!" he says.

# Master Butcher profile



# Franz sets the pace

For a man who describes his role at ever-expanding Barossa Fine Foods as “decreasing,” Franz Knoll is mighty busy man.

Three of his sons - Andreas, Alex and Dieter – run the business day to day, “freeing” Franz to oversee quality assurance, develop new products and set new standards.

“We’re still growing by at least 10% a year, but my role here is decreasing,” says Franz, 59, Australia’s most awarded smallgoods maker.

“I don’t really run the business – I’ve mainly been monitoring it for 10 years.”

But there can hardly be enough hours in the day for the third generation smallgoods maker, who oversees “big picture” issues including nationally growing the Barossa Fine Foods and Standom brands.

Lately, he’s been looking at selling into Asia and after several fact-finding trips, he sees huge potential.

Then there’s assorted smallgoods awards and competitions such as Sausage King. Competition success, Franz has long argued, is the best possible form of marketing.

So he keeps entering and he keeps winning. He’s so far won around 1,000 national and State competition medals, but he’s not sure of the exact number.

He tries to attend as many industry events as he can, he chairs AMIC’s national smallgoods council, and recently he successfully completed the process of becoming an AMIC Master Butcher.

All this hasn’t left much time for Franz to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Barossa Fine Foods, which started on a kitchen counter.

“It has not been easy to grow the business but we (his family) have been healthy with no personal issues – and we have a good team,” he says.

“You’ve got to be innovative. There are a pile of experiments we are going through – it’s ongoing.



“We are early adopters of trends and changes. We invest great energy in research and development.”

A pleasing anniversary “present” was the company’s winning of the Medium Enterprise section of the SA Telstra Business Award in July.

Judges said the family takes “control and responsibility for the strong stable growth and sustainability of their business, with a focus on excellence and consistency.”

Franz, a third generation smallgoods maker, and his wife Barbara took over a stall called Barossa Fine Foods at Adelaide Central Market, selling limited smallgoods which he made on his parents’ farm below the Barossa Reservoir.

The company has enjoyed remarkable growth of at least 10% a year in recent

times. It now employs 200 staff and runs a chain of stores offering a plethora of gourmet goods and experiences, including cafe dining.

Franz puts the success of the business down to the family’s willingness to grow and adapt in an increasingly competitive market.

“When an opportunity comes up, we tend to say, ‘Yes, we’ll give it a go’ more often than not,” he says.

“The competition is so intense these days, we have to be more nimble and adapt.

“You have to use your reputation and your uniqueness in a niche market.

“We benchmark our food against our peers and we like to keep changing what we offer.”



## Paul's pinnacle

Paul Suleyman says he feels like he's climbed Mount Everest.

"I've been a butcher for close on 35 years and I love what I do. Becoming a Master Butcher is the pinnacle," says Paul, 49, who has spent most of working life at Goodwood Quality Meats.

"I feel honoured that my skills have been recognised in this way. I feel humbled, too, and I thank the people who have helped me over the years, starting with Mick Hammond."

Paul was hired as a clean-up boy when he was 15 by Mick, who ran the Goodwood shop for 49 years.

"I was in Year 11 at the old Goodwood Technical High School. Dad stopped giving me an allowance, telling me to get a job, so after school I'd do the washing up for Mick," he says.

"I was offered an apprenticeship as a plumber. I would be paid \$75 a week and I've had to dig ditches. But I knocked back the offer when Mick offered me an apprenticeship.

"I thought butchering was terrific – I liked the work, I was paid \$150 a week and they even cooked my breakfast! How good was that!

"Lambs were hung on rails behind the counter and there was sawdust on the floor. We used cleavers at chopping blocks. Now, I'm the only one here who does – I like them for breaking up lambs.

"Back then, three different choppers would hang off the side of the blocks – heavy for bodies, medium, and lighter for chops.

"The heavy choppers would just about break your shoulder if you used one all day. Now everyone is petrified of them, but they did the job.

"Lou Zammit was working here then. Mick and the others taught me so much. Mick was a butcher from the old school and he taught me the old skills. I was lucky."

On completing his apprenticeship, Paul set off on overseas travel before returning for a nine-year stint at the Goodwood shop.

He then shifted to hospitality. "I heard Mick

needed some help so I came back and I've been here ever since, for over 20 years," Paul says.

"Mick was trained in the traditional ways and he didn't like new-fangled stuff like pan-ready meals, so he asked me to do it."

When Mick retired a few years ago and the shop was purchased by Dave Armstrong, Paul's strong role continued.

He has a naturally strong rapport with customers, some of whom he has known for more than 30 years. He is big on supporting charities and helping community and sporting clubs.

As well as mentoring an impressive line of apprentices, Paul has overseen some 30 work experience placements.

"Three or four times a year, I take school groups through the shop. I show them how we process lambs so they learn where their food comes from and we make sausages for them to take home," he says.

"It gives them an idea of what butchers do – it helps to raise our profile and to show what a skilled trade it is.

"I often have chefs come in to learn how to properly cut meat. Chefs are often in the limelight, but butchers prepare the meat in the first place."

## Lamb's the best ever, says Tony

Farmers attribute good pasture from heavy September rains for producing lambs of exceptional quality this spring.

So while butchers will be paying a pretty penny, consumers will be in for a tasty treat.

Butcher Tony O'Connell, who has been operating at Adelaide Central Market for 44 years, says, "The lamb has been beautiful – it's the best we've ever had."

"Higher demand is forcing up prices but consumers will pay as Australians simply love our lamb."

Meanwhile, MLA's last Australia Day lamb advertisement has taken out a prestigious award for the second year running, winning TV Ad of the Year at the Mumbrella Awards.

The Operation Boomerang ad featured well known people on a mission to save Australians abroad from going without lamb on Australia Day.

Lamb sales jumped by 39.5% over the weekly average for the week of Australia Day, making it the most successful lamb ad.



# Reece's skills shine

Searching for a career path, Reece Jeffree (pictured) wanted to learn skills that not everybody could master.

So he took up butchering and has flourished, earning the title as AMIC's Apprentice of the Year for 2016.

"The knowledge that a butcher must accumulate through being taught and learning from experience appealed to me," says Reece, 20, a third year apprentice at Bruce's Meat.

"I wanted to do something different, something that most people are interested in but can't do themselves.

"Most people love their meat but not everybody can break a body of beef or make lamb cutlets.

"My mates respect what I do, asking what's best to buy for the barbecue or why this is better than that.

"I enjoy the customer service side – I get satisfaction from helping people create enjoyable meals.

"It's always great when someone comes back to the shop and thanks me for my advice after a meal turned out well."

As a schoolboy wanting spending money, Reece dropped in his details to Bruce's Meat at Pasade-

na and was later hired as a clean-up boy.

He worked there after school and for one weekend shift for two years before being offered an apprenticeship.

He presently spends most of his time at the Mitcham store but does occasional shifts at the group's other three Adelaide stores.

Last year, Reece finished second in the SA Apprentice of the Year competition behind Ryan Doherty, also of Bruce's Meat.

Reece was top dog this year ahead of his mate and fellow third year Bruce's Meat apprentice, Dillon Pitman, and Caleb Sundqvist, of Goodwood Quality Meats.

In the mystery box competition, the apprentices had 90 minutes in which to turn set amounts of meat into value added products, impressing judges with their vision and skills.

Among the products created by Reece were a stuffed leg of lamb, a pork rack roast, a stir fry, and stuffed mushrooms.

"It was nerve wracking and a bit of a blur," he says.

Reece now progresses to the national final in Hobart in February.



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# A triple bounce back!

After a dozen years out of the competition limelight, McLaren Vale butcher Ian Shaw is making the most of winning two SA Sausage King crowns plus the Best Burger title.

“We had success in the Traditional Australian section for two years in a row about 12-13 years ago but we haven’t had the same success since,” says Ian, of Ellis Butchers.

“And winning the Best Burger competition put the icing on the cake. We’re naturally very pleased – and it’s good for business.

“We’ve had a very good local response. We put the news on Facebook and got 180 likes on the first night, and the local papers were interested.”

Ian won the Australian Lamb category for his Country Style Lamb sausage, which he describes as a finely cut traditional sausage with herbs, and he took the Continental crown for Italian Pork & Chilli.

In the Best Burger competition, Ian triumphed with his Vietnamese Chicken Burger which features external pieces of coconut that give visual intrigue.

“It stands out in the display. It’s a thickly cut burger and you get



Ellis Butchers’ Ian Shaw... the toast of McLaren Vale for his Sausage King success.

a mouthful of herbs. I saw the style when I visited Vietnam and liked it,” he says.

Mathie’s Meat Shoppe, Clare, was runner up in Best Burger for its popular Bush Burger with saltbush mutton, carrot and seasoning, and third was Muller’s Meat Store, at Monash in the Riverland, with its Beef Brisket burger.

In Sausage King, prolific winner Franz Knoll, of Barossa Fine Foods, won the Gourmet section for his ever-popular Mississippi sausage with capsicum, cheese and smoke flavour.

Sausage King had a real country flavour to it this year, with butchers from across SA standing out.

Two previous multi champions won sections – Jason Mathie, of Clare, in Traditional Australian for his Thick BBQ Sausage, and Shaun Watson, of Tender Cuts at Naracoorte, in Poultry for his Lemon Pepper chicken breast sausage.

Daryl Muller, of Monash, won one silver and two bronze trophies, and Andrew Bedell, of Our Butcher @ Cowell, won trophies for second and third.

Completing the country sweep was Mick Lamond, of Collins Court Butcher at Mt Gambier, who won the Traditional Australian Pork crown for his Thick Pork Sausage.

“We’ve been making it for five years using MBL Old English Pork meal – it’s a traditional pork sausage with no herbs or spices,” Mick says.

“Winning Sausage King is a great boost for us. People know about it from Facebook and the trophy is in the shop, so we’re getting plenty of nice compliments.”

## Goodwood’s gold

In recognition for continual improvement, Goodwood Quality Meats has been attained the highest gold standard in AMIC’s Awards for Excellence.

“We’re absolutely thrilled. It’s satisfying recognition for all our hard work,” says butcher Dave Armstrong, pictured, who purchased the store from veteran Mick Hammond in 2013.

The Goodwood store is only the second store to reach gold status in the shop awards, which were introduced last year to lift the profile of the industry.

Leabrook Quality Meats, run by Michael

Lawrence and Luke Moody, attained gold status last year and again repeated the feat this year.

Two shops reached silver standard this year – Our Butcher @ Cowell and Shanahan’s Quality Butchers, Woodcroft.

Since taking over at Goodwood, Dave Armstrong and offsider Paul Suleyman have improved the business while retaining its traditional values and proven products.

“It’s a shop with a modern look but an old fashioned charm,” says Dave.

“We’ve given it a timber look but kept the



big window display, and we now make smallgoods here.

“We’ve brought the butchers from out the back to be seen by customers.”

Judges praised the shop for design and product display, costing and price management, and customer relationship management.

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Australians' consumption of beef has dropped by an average of almost 3kg in a year due to record high prices, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Domestic beef consumption fell from 28.3kg per person in 2014-15 to 25.4kg last financial year.

But the value of domestic beef consumption remained stable at \$7.8 billion – about the same as the previous year.

MLA says this shows a willingness by consumers to continue to purchase beef in the face of record prices.

"Consumers consistently rate price as the most important factor when buying beef,"

# BEEF: Consumption falls by average 3kg

MLA Managing Director Richard Norton told Beef Central.

"The rising price of beef has presented a challenge to the household budget but while consumers might be buying less beef, they are prepared to pay more to keep it on their dinner plates.

"We need to keep selling the benefits of nutrition and the high protein 'hit' that

consumers get from beef.

"Australian retail beef prices are still relatively inexpensive when compared with the rest of the world."

About 30% of Australia's beef production is consumed domestically.

Chicken overtook beef as Australia's most popular meat several years ago.

# Re-thinking secondary cuts

With beef at record high prices, Richard Gunner says there's a whole new world of affordable steak cuts to discover for the barbecue season.

Richard called on butchers to help consumers understand that secondary cuts of beef don't have to only be for wintry slow cooking.

"Traditionally, we associate secondary cuts with slow cooking casseroles and roasts of winter," says the owner of four Feast! Fine Foods stores.

"And we can get a little stuck in our ways in Australia and tend to think of steaks only in the form of T-bones, rumps and sirloins.

"With prices so high, it's easy for consumers to think they should be cutting back on beef.

"With a few expert tips and a bit of inspiration from Europe and South America, there's a new world of affordable steak cuts to discover for barbecue season.

"Buying from a local butcher gives consumers the benefit of exploring some lesser known cuts and getting some expert knowledge and advice."

Richard issued a Media Release

in September on cheaper cuts, urging consumers to seek advice on barbecuing from local butchers.

"Europeans and South Americans have been enjoying secondary grilling cuts for generations," he states.



Grilled flat iron steak and Argentine salad.

"Cheaper beef cuts such as onglet, flat iron, skirt or flank lend themselves to grilling and can easily be found at specialist butchers across SA.

"These cuts are some of the most flavoursome available and well worth the short wait while your butcher prepares your cut in-store."

One of the most popular cuts

across Europe is onglet, which is sometimes known as hanger steak. It's called feather steak in the UK.

Significantly cheaper than premium cuts, onglet is often referred to as "the butcher's cut" - testimony to its quality

and intensity of flavour.

Richard says, "Onglet is best cooked fast and hot with a good, long rest to allow the juices to settle - you should be looking to rest it for nearly as long as it was on the grill."

Flat iron is another cut that is overlooked. Its source is a surprise, found by skilled butchery of the oyster blade.

"Once all of the silverskin and gristle is removed, it becomes a delicious, tender and often well-marbled steak that gives scotch fillet a run for its money," Richard says.

"The warmer weather has us dusting off the barbecue, so grab some charcoal and take inspiration from South American cooking. Ask your butcher for a South American favourite - skirt steak.

"The best way to cook this cut is slow-chargrilling. Take your time, grill to medium and slice across the grain for a truly flavoursome experience.

"Similarly flank, or 'bavette' to the French, needs to be treated to some slow-chargrilling. As a leaner cut than skirt steak, flank is best enjoyed medium rare or rare.

"It's all about knowing how to treat each cut of beef.

"With increased beef prices at the moment there's never been a better reason to get in to see your local butcher and really explore these more affordable options.

"With a few expert tips, beef can be back on your weekly menu."