

GOLD, GOLD, GOLD



Bush tucker inspires new MBL rubs for butchers only

MBL has turned to bush tucker to spearhead our development of an exciting new set of six rubs and seasonings exclusively for butchers to sell under our Butcher's Banquet label.

A stunning Gold Range consists of three Aussie-themed rubs – Lemon Myrtle & Mountain Pepper, Saltbush & Aniseed Myrtle, and Aussie Mango & Desert Lime.

The new flavours are partnered in the set by three Traditional Range rubs – Master Butchers Lamb Rub, Exotic Grill Rub, and Greek Yiros Rub.

"This is exciting news, giving butchers exclu-

sive new products to sell in the expanding rubs and seasonings sector," says MBL General Manager of Sales and Marketing, Bexley Carman.

"We're particularly pleased to have developed great new rubs using all-natural, Aussie bush tucker ingredients. It was a painstaking process to perfect."

The Butcher's Banquet rubs will be released in February. MBL has produced promotional material, including signs for butcher shop windows.

The rubs were developed in MBL's test kitchen at Athol Park in response to

requests from our butcher Members for rubs to call their own.

Production has begun by MBL at MBL. The rubs are later expected to be sold nationally under the Ikon Pack brand, generating another revenue source to ultimately be shared by MBL Members.

It is the first time MBL has developed our own range of rubs and seasonings which have become popular for diverse cooking styles and boomed with the American slow-and-low barbecue movement.

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FOOD APP ON WAY

MBL is teaming with Adelaide's Food Safe Australia to launch a new food labelling and click & collect app.

The game-changing app will be offered to MBL Members at a reduced rate. Full details will be in the next MBL News.

Another happy Christmas

Retail butchers enjoyed strong trade for the second Christmas of the Covid era, with many impressively adding to the stellar sales of Christmas 2020.

Butchers reported undreamt sales rises of up to 30% for Christmas 2020 but were uncertain of what Christmas 2021 would hold due to widespread confusion over the reopening of borders leading up to the festive season.

However, most butchers reported matching 2020's festive trade or topping it by up to 10%.

Others reported double-digit rises of up to 20%, making 2021's figures vastly superior to the "normal" Christmas of 2019.

Strong Christmas figures capped two years of resurgent trade since the arrival of Covid-19 in early 2020 and the resultant increase in cooking at home.

Confusion over the reopening of borders in December played havoc with travel plans, in turn resulting in many customers

making changes to Christmas orders with butchers.

"As people's travel plans changed, their Christmas orders changed. There was upsizing and downsizing – it was bloody difficult," says Goodwood Quality Meats owner Dave Armstrong.

"We also had more late orders than normal as people held off until travel plans became clearer."

Some people downsized their orders because guests they expected from interstate cancelled the trip when queues of up to four hours formed at border checks.

Others planned to travel but didn't want to take the risk of a snap lockdown so they stayed at home and lodged late orders for Christmas.

To meet late order for valued customers, Dave says he and fellow butchers Paul Suleyman and Luke Leyson gave up their reserved hams and turkeys.

"It wasn't the first time it's happened. You must look after your customers. I had a bolar roast on Christmas Day," Dave says.

"Despite the difficulties, our shop had a successful Christmas as normal. We again improved on the previous Christmas."

Trevor Hill also reported a high number of changes to orders, both up and down, in Bruce's Meat shops where festive trade rose by around 5-7%.

Christmas sales across the four shops leapt by 30% in 2020, so an extra 5-7% on top made for another outstanding result.

"We were stronger across all shops," Trevor says.

"We sold more hams and turkeys this year, and sales were strong between Christmas and New Year although we probably expected more red meat sales."

At Renmark, Christmas trade was up by 20% over the previous year, says delighted owner Brett Gerhardt.

"I really didn't know what type of Christmas we'd have because of Covid. We saw a lot of ducks and drakes with orders being changed," Brett says.

"But it was a fantastic Christmas again. Each Christmas has got

better for us since we opened in 2015."

Christmas trade was also "fantastic" at Maidment's Meat Service, Strathalbyn, says co-owner Liss Maidment.

"With uncertainty around Covid, we capped our production at our level of Christmas 2020 so we had two fantastic Christmases running," she says.



Award-winning smallgoods maker Steve Gay's double-smoked leg hams drew customers from far and wide to Angaston, sparking busy Christmas trade at Barossa Smokehouse Butchers.

Steve's hams, made in traditional style in an old smokehouse behind the former Schulz shop, sold out as usual, prompting excellent post-Christmas feedback.

"We had another good Christmas, a bit better than the year before. We did well for a small shop," says Steve, who co-owns the shop with Peter Barratt.

"We sold a lot more pork rolls and lamb roasts than the previous Christmas, as well as lots of top-end steak."

MBL NEWS

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Bexley Carman and Mackenzie Beames with the new rubs in the MBL test kitchen.

Bush tucker inspires new MBL rubs for butchers only

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“Sales of rubs are increasing everywhere, from supermarkets to even car parts stores, and while butchers have been part of it, they wanted something of their own,” Bexley says.

“They told us they wanted exclusive rubs that were a little different. We took up the challenge and we’re excited at what we’ve achieved.

“As a Co-operative, we listen to what our Members are telling us and we take appropriate action whenever we can.”

Bexley says MBL was delighted at creating the new rubs as well as designing classy packaging, including the use of gold labelling.

He says the research and development team, led by Michaela Rock and Darryl Viatkus, deserved credit for developing the rubs from scratch.

“Darryl’s a champion of new rubs, patiently tracking down Aussie bush tucker ingredients for rubs like Lemon Myrtle & Mountain Pepper and Aussie Mango & Desert Lime,” Bexley says.

“He sourced stunning all-natural flavours which were used as bases and we developed the rubs from there.

“We went out of our way to use Australian ingre-

dients where possible. The three Gold Range rubs have 97%, 79% and 73% Australian ingredients.

“Strong encouragement from butchers drove us to persist in the development of the rubs, which required a lot of time and patience.”

Bexley says the sales of rubs and seasonings have become huge, growing at a brisk pace.

“The feedback from our reps is that the sales of rubs in South Australian butcher shops have gone mad, particularly over the last six months,” he says.

“Rubs now sit at the heart of what every butcher can sell in the shop.

“It’s big for butchers to know these new Butcher’s Banquet rubs are available only to them and won’t appear in supermarkets or anywhere else.”

MBL rep Shane Reynolds, a strong supporter of butchers’ calls for exclusive rubs, says it was a natural progression for the Co-op to get onboard.

“Rubs are all the rage for American-style cooking, barbecue grills and smokers. I use them – I have a smoke oven,” says Shane, a former butcher.

“I kept being asked why MBL didn’t do rubs. Now we do, and a big bonus for butchers is that they are theirs exclusively.”

‘Strong encouragement from butchers drove us to persist in the development of the rubs, which required a lot of time and patience’ – Bexley Carman





POWERHOUSE!

‘Mind-blowing’ statistics reveal the strength of a Bordertown dynasty

South Australia’s biggest regional butcher shop produces the equivalent of one 250g serve of meat for 10,000 people a day.

Butcher Steve Richards reached this “mind-blowing” conclusion by crunching the numbers at Bordertown’s Richards Quality Meats, which has been run by the one family in the one location for 86 years.

He reached for his trusty calculator to put into perspective the high volume of meat passing through the third-generation shop in a typical week.

The prime local beef, lamb and pork comes from the family’s modern abattoir, run by Steve’s cousin Michael Richards on the town’s outskirts.

“I always knew we processed a lot of meat but the result is quite mind-blowing when you break it down into daily serves,” Steve says.

The calculation was made a few years ago and is now a little conservative as the business – a mix of 70% retail and 30% wholesale – has become even busier.

The business has 27 staff, made up of 22 people, including some casuals, in the shop and attached processing centre, plus another five at the five-day abattoir.

Staff numbers, combined with the volume

of meat processed, makes this the biggest butchery in regional SA, a fact that the genial cousins acknowledge but don’t advertise.

They are so consistently busy that Steve’s plans to renovate the shop have been gathering dust for 10 years because he can’t make time for builders to come in.

“We want to modernise the shop but we’re just too busy to close,” says Steve, who, with MBL’s help, toured Adelaide shops for renovation ideas.

MBL Sales Manager Dale Rowe, who has been the Richards rep for the past 16 years, says, “This would have to be the biggest regional butchery. It’s a great business.”

Trevor Eden, who heads the William Angliss Institute meat training program throughout regional SA, says, “The Richards shop is the State’s biggest regional butcher shop by far.

“Steve and Michael may not realise just how big they are compared to others as they don’t go from store to store like we do.”



Steve Richards... continuing a family tradition begun by his grandfather 86 years ago.

➤ At one time, Trevor and fellow trainer Mark Wadsworth were training 14 Richards staff, necessitating overnight stays.

“We’re regarded as a local institution and we’re very proud of our history over 86 years,” says Steve, who began in the shop at age 17 and has enjoyed working there ever since.

“It’s all about quality product and bending over backwards for customers. We always say Yes and then work to make it happen.”

Apart from their own strong retail trade, the Richards supply supermarkets, hotels, roadhouses and sporting clubs, and do private kills for farmers and other butchers.

The dynasty began in 1935 with a flip of a coin by Steve and Michael’s grandfather, Allan Willam Ernest (AWE) Richards, who was a butcher in Taillem Bend.

“When his house burnt down, he decided to move and looked at shops that were for sale in Bordertown and in the Riverland, at Renmark or possibly Waikerie,” Steve says.

“He flipped a coin – heads for Bordertown and tails for the Riverland. It landed on heads so that’s where he came with his wife, Mavis.”

AWE was a complete master butcher who slaughtered cattle, lambs and pigs, and made his own smallgoods. He was respected as a hard-working businessman and family man.

He ran the operation with Mavis and staff before their four sons – Ron, Don, Ken and



Michael Richards... drove the modernisation and expansion of the family’s abattoir.

Barry – and two daughters – Shirley and Janice – gradually joined.

By the 1960s, the shop had expanded into the former bank building next door.

Upon AWE’s death in 1975, Don and Ron took the reins and set about growing an already-strong business. Both brothers retired in 2010, allowing the succession of Don’s son Steve and Ron’s sons Michael and David.

David later stepped aside, leaving Steve and Michael to continue running the business.

From AWE’s time through to today, the Richards family has been staunch supporters of MBL and one of our oldest Members.

Steve says, “We get just about everything from MBL. Dale Rowe is tremendous, really

looking after us for a lot of years.”

The Richards family has always operated its own slaughterhouse on the edge of town, buying cattle, lambs and pigs from surrounding farmers.

It has been updated twice since 1980 to ensure compliance with all regulations. Michael Richards and a five-man crew run a busy operation.

“There was a slaughterhouse on the farm here when my grandfather started in Bordertown in 1935. Years ago, just about every country butcher shop had a slaughterhouse,” Michael says.

“Part of a butcher’s training was to work in a slaughterhouse, the belief being that you

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Michael Richards heads a five-man abattoir team, supplying the family shop and others. They also slaughter animals for farmers.



Like father, like son.... Steve Richards strikes a similar pose to his now-retired father who was photographed by MBL News in 2010.

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had to learn the skills of the kill before you could fully master the processing.

“There aren’t many small country slaughterhouses left following the rising of hygiene standards over the years.

“We built a new slaughterhouse in 1980 so we had already complied with the higher standards that later followed Garibaldi, and we expanded about 10 years ago, adding a loading area, office, kitchen and dining room.”

Michael says his grandfather saw the benefits of buying additional land around his farmhouse and abattoir.

“He worked pretty hard and bought as much land as he could. As well as having cattle and sheep, he had a pigsty and a chicken coop, and kept some turkeys,” Michael says.

“He was able to supply his shop with his own beef, lamb, pork, chicken and turkey. We talk about paddock to plate as if it’s new – AWE was doing it 80 years ago.”

Steve says, “AWE also bought meat from other farmers but by buying more land, he got to the stage of supplying all the shop’s lamb.”

AWE ended up with a farm covering 2,600 acres (over 1,000ha). “I run the farm now. It’s a job in itself but I have someone there fulltime,” Steve says.

In the old days, AWE and eldest daughter Shirley would ride on horseback to

surrounding properties, buying additional cattle and driving them back to the slaughterhouse.

The old slaughterhouse was very basic, made of tree trunks and galvanised iron.

Two tree trunks with natural forks carried another tree trunk which was attached to two endless chains, used to lift the beasts while they were skinned.

There was no refrigeration, just a meat safe. Meat was left hanging overnight, taken to the shop by horse and cart next morning.

With no electricity, beef was split manually with axes. Later, car lights were turned on for late finishes.

Offal was cooked to feed the pigs. Waste water was drained into a pit, emptied by bucket into 44-gallon (116-litre) drums, towed away in sledges by horses and tipped over paddocks.

The old practices now seem a world away, with today’s high standards resulting in more work than ever for the Richards abattoir.

“We do service kills for farmers and other butcher shops as well as our own,” Michael says.

“We’re doing more kills than ever for farmers. We slaughter 50 to 60 sheep for farmers a week. In spring, it can be up to 120 sheep a week. We also do private kills of cattle and pigs.

“The bodies go to the shop for the butchers

to cut up and package the different cuts for collection by the farmers.”

Steve sources meat for the shop from suppliers within 100k of Bordertown. Some local farmers have been supplying the shop for almost 50 years.

“It gives them a bit of pride to come and see what their meat looks like and to be able to say they supply the butcher shop,” Steve says.

Having reliable access to local suppliers was never more crucial than during Covid-19 lockdowns.

With big abattoir closures halting normal supply, the Richards shop was busier than ever, with queues of 30 people lining up down the street.

Michael says, “We were lucky to have enough meat. Our own shop kept calling for more, and we were able to help out other butcher shops as far away as Clare and some smallgoods manufacturers.”

Now aged 49 and 51 respectively, Steve and Michael expect to be still running the business when it reaches 100 years in family ownership in 2035.

There’s no guarantee that the fourth generation will take on the business but two possibilities are in the shadows.

Steve’s stepson Nat, 12, loves working in the shop on school holidays, making rissoles and hamburgers, while Michael’s son James, 18, the youngest of four brothers, is also showing interest.

You're a Legend, Lynne

Learn to love what you do is key advice to young people starting out in the retail meat game from stalwart Lynne Zammit, the latest recipient of AMIC SA's Legends Award.

"I did what I did because I loved it," says Lynne who, with husband Lou, built Windsor Meats at Malvern into one of Adelaide's most-cherished butcher shops.

"There were some tough times and long days. Money was short. Our four kids used to sleep on a mattress in the shop while we worked into the night before going home.

"But would I do it all again if I had my time over? Yes, in a heartbeat because I loved it."

With personal service her solid catchcry, Lynne developed long, firm friendships with many loyal customers in 30 years at Windsor Meats.

"Trust is paramount in building relationships with customers. Trust is fantastic and invaluable," she says.

"We always told staff to treat customers like family because you'll spend more time in the shop than with your own family.

"Butchery is such a personal thing – you get to know the life story of just about all of your regulars."

Despite long hours in the shop, Lynne



AMIC SA Legends Award recipient Lynne Zammit makes her acceptance speech.

served the wider industry as chair of AMIC's SA Retail Council for 12 years from 2003. She also sat on the national retail council for seven years.

Lynne has become SA's third recipient of AMIC SA's Legends Award which was introduced to recognise people, not necessarily butchers, for significant contributions to the industry.

The first recipient, in 2018, was Paul Sandercock for his 23 years of sterling service as AMIC SA's Executive Director. Paul is now an MBL Director.

In 2019, TAFE SA Meat Studies lecturer Graeme Elliott became the second recipient for training hundreds of aspiring butchers over two decades.

Lynne was succeeded as head of AMIC's SA Retail Council by Trevor Hill, who presented her with the Legends Award at the AMIC awards night.

Trevor says, "Lynne not only contributed a huge amount to AMIC but she was always helping individuals, including encouraging young people.

"Everyone who has worked with Lynne speaks very highly of her. She also became a generous friend to many of her customers over the years.

"She stopped working in the shop five years ago but customers still keep asking how she's going.

"Her love for the industry followed through to the high standards she and Lou set in their shop."

Lynne and Lou are now co-owners of the shop with their protege and former apprentice Sam Burt, who heads everyday operations. Lou helps out at busy times.

Lynne says, "Although I no longer work, I still feel very much part of the shop. I still call in to say hello to staff and customers, with planned half-hour visits often lasting two or three hours."



Winning team... Lynne and Lou Zammit celebrated 30 years at Windsor Meats in 2019.

'We always told staff to treat customers like family because you'll spend more time in the shop than with your own family' – Lynne Zammit

PAUL THE ROCK

How a clean-up boy evolved into a Goodwood institution over 40 years

As a fresh-faced lad of 15 needing pocket money, Paul Suleyman started working after school as a clean-up boy at Goodwood Quality Meats.

He's still there 40 years later, having navigated the highs and lows to become a local institution.

"It doesn't seem like 40 years – it has gone so fast and there have been so many changes along the way," says Paul, 55, who was named one of AMIC SA's inaugural Master Butchers in 2016.

"The sawdust has gone from the floor and the ready meals and pastries have come in,

and some people are now third-generation customers.

"People say, 'Hell, Paul, you're still here!' I respond that if I wasn't here, I'd be somewhere else.

"I've dedicated most of my life to butchery. I love what I do and I reckon I've got another 10 good years or so left."

Paul is unsure exactly how many years he has worked in the Goodwood shop as his time there was interspersed with five years of overseas travel and several years in the hotel industry.

But he clearly remembers being hired as a clean-up boy by Mick Hammond, who ran the 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 I'd do the washing up for Mick after school," he says.

"I was offered an apprenticeship as a plumber. I would be paid \$75 a week and I'd have 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!

"Lambs were hung on rails behind the counter and there was sawdust on the floor. We used cleavers at chopping blocks.

"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.

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

"Around this time when I was 17, an old butcher who was retiring passed on his steel to me. I treasure it, still using it every



Sartorial elegance... Paul looking the complete Master Butcher. Photo: Jon Burke.



> “Over the years, I’ve accumulated a massive collection of steels, knives and cleavers. I’m a bit of a bowerbird.”

On completing his four-year apprenticeship, Paul travelled overseas before returning for a 10-year stint at the Goodwood shop. He later spent time in hospitality.

“I heard Mick needed some help so I came back and I’ve been here ever since,” 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. We moved from a chop and sausage shop into a modern shop.”

When Mick retired in 2013, the business was purchased by Dave Armstrong and Paul’s strong role continued as the shop was elevated to a new level of excellence, winning a host of industry awards.

Dave says, “Paul served the grandparents of some of today’s customers and he has become as much of a local institution as Mick ever was.”

Paul says, “When Mick sold the shop, I thought it would maybe be time to move on but Dave came in with enthusiasm and new ideas. He gave my career a second lease of life.

“With Dave, you are always learning and things are always changing. He encouraged me to qualify as a smallgoods maker and to take part in butcher competitions like Meatstock.

“Dave and I went to the first Meatstock. I’ve competed in Australia and overseas and I’ve had some success, winning six trophies in eight years.



Paul, pictured in 2016, still uses a steel given to him at 17 by a retiring butcher.



The Goodwood crew celebrates winning AMIC SA’s Best Shop award in 2018.



The pinnacle... Paul says a career highlight came in 2016 when he was named, with Wilson Lowe (left) and Franz Knoll (right), as an inaugural AMIC Master Butcher.

“Competitions allow you to mix with other butchers and learn things from them. I also love dropping into butcher shops wherever I go.”

Paul is always happy to help other butchers, saying the real competition is from supermarkets rather than other butcher shops.

He has a naturally strong rapport with customers, many of whom show amazing loyalty and appreciation of the Goodwood butchers.

“Last year (during Covid restrictions) when only three customers were allowed in the shop at once, there was wait of an hour and a half. People queued up the street and around the corner,” Paul says.

“They appreciate what we do, although they think we’re mad to work 17 hours straight leading up to Christmas. I can be

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HOME COMPOSTABLE hero!

MBL's Home Compostable Hero promotion is open to Members and customers who buy any two products from our Home Compostable packaging range.

They will go into the draw to win a weekend away in an Airbnb Eco Getaway of their choice to the value of \$600.

And each month until June, we will select a Hero who will be featured in MBL News and receive point-of-sale marketing displays and social media support.

JANUARY HERO: Campbelltown Centre Meats

A personal belief in caring for the environment drives Campbelltown butcher Steve Stentiford's use of MBL home compostable packaging products.



Steve Stentiford.

"I basically use them for environmental factors. Our industry uses so much plastic; I'm just trying to reduce the amount we use," says the owner of Campbelltown Centre Meats.

Steve switched to MBL's home compostable eco-cane trays and soakers as soon as they became available, undeterred by their higher cost compared to plastic-laden alternatives.

"I don't care so much about the price – it's about the quality of the products and protecting the environment," he says.

"Customers, especially those in their 40s

and 50s, like using home compostable packaging and disposing of them in their organics bins.

"My middle-aged customers seem more concerned about the environment, saying they are trying to look after the planet for their grandchildren.

"Younger customers may well care (for the environment) but generally they don't communicate it as much as older people."

Eco-friendly packaging may cost more but Steve agrees with MBL's expectation of prices coming down as sales increase and manufacturing costs decrease with volume.

FEBRUARY HERO: Maidment's, Strathalbyn

MBL has made it easy for food businesses to switch to home compostable packaging, says Strathalbyn butcher Liss Maidment.

"MBL has become a one-stop shop for green packaging and it's been a godsend," says Liss, of Maidment's Meat Service.

Liss, who runs the busy shop with brother Mark, reports strong customer approval for MBL's home compostable eco-cane trays, soakers, produce bags and vac bags.

"We support MBL as much as possible because of the quality of the products and the face-to-face updates from (MBL rep) Greg Goodfellow," she says.

"We first started looking for compostable packaging five years ago but there wasn't much available so we went with recyclable plastic trays.

"Now the technology is available, we've switched to MBL's compostable trays which a lot of customers put in their garden worm



Sibling butchers Liss and Mark Maidment... strong supporters of MBL's green packaging.

farms, along with the soaker pads.

"MBL's produce bags and vac bags have also been well received by our customers.

"Overall, more customers are telling us they want to use green products, and we've got savvy about reducing plastic in the shop.

"I'm a bit of a hippy at home in that I'm very conscious of the amount of rubbish I generate for landfill. It takes me a month to fill a regular bin.

"I've been into recycling for years and now home composting, so it's been easy to transfer my principals to the shop."

A real turkey

England's Daily Mail newspaper reported a woman complaining to her butcher that her "pink turkey" ruined Christmas - only to be told that she had bought a gammon joint (pork).

Zoe messaged NL Woodcock Butchers in Manchester, saying she was "very disappointed with the turkey."

She cooked the "turkey" for hours because it remained "very, very pink" inside before giving up and having Christmas dinner two hours late with no meat.

She later tasted the outside of the meat, realising it was actual-gammon.

Neil the butcher found her original order to prove she indeed asked for gammon, with no reference to turkey.

The customer apologised and asked whether any other turkeys were left, commenting, "Apparently I am a pillock."

Fortunately, Neil saw the funny side and even offered to drop off a turkey breast free of charge because it was the best laugh he'd had all year.



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Two Goodwood insitutions... Paul Suleyman and Mick Hammond in MBL News in 2010.

PAUL THE ROCK

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embarrassed by customers buying Christmas gifts, like my favourite bottle of wine."

Last Christmas and not for the first time, Paul sold a Christmas ham which had been reserved for himself.

"It was for a regular customer whose Christmas plans changed. I didn't make a big deal of it, I just said we had a spare ham out back," he says.

"You get to know your customers and their families. Some are amazing, inspiring people. I see children grow up and bring their own children into the shop."

Paul tells of a recent "flashback" when he handed a piece of fritz to a child in his mother's arms.

"I told her I clearly remember giving her some fritz while she was being held by her mother in the exact spot as she was standing today. It blew her away," he says.

"I've been to customers' weddings and funerals. I've helped some move furniture into hospices because they had no-one else to help them."

Over the years, Paul has given much time to showcasing butchery skills to give people an insight into the knowledge and skills required to be a butcher.

He has overseen some 30 work experience placements, has lectured at Regency TAFE and has demonstrated assorted skills at a local cooking school.

In pre-Covid days, he'd take local school groups

through the shop several times a year.

"I'd show school groups how we process lambs so they learn where their food comes from. We usually made sausages for them to take home," he says.

"It gave them an idea of what butchers do, helping to raise our profile and to show what a skilled trade it is.

"Competitions like Meatsock, which attract good crowds, serve the same purpose."

In pre-Covid days, Paul says chefs would often come into the shop to learn how to properly cut meat.

"Chefs are amazed at what we do. Chefs are often in the limelight, but butchers prepare the meat in the first place," he says.

Away from work, Paul and his wife Tiffany show and breed English Staffordshire bull terriers, and help out at dog shelters.

"We have four Staffies at present - three are Australian champions and the other is a couch creature," he says.

Paul is also an AFL tragic, a "red hot" Port Power supporter along with fellow Goodwood butcher Caleb Sundquist.

"We sit in the Port cheer squad and have a lot of fun," he says.

Although he has many good years ahead of him, Paul can take great satisfaction from a rewarding career that has been full of surprises.

"I can't have done too badly because I can pass the old test of holding up both hands to show I've still got all my fingers," he says.

At age 41, Tim Von Stanke quit his career as a South-East crayfisherman to become a mature-age apprentice butcher – and he hasn't looked back.

Tim quickly proved a dab hand at butchering and, after completing his apprenticeship, he now operates his own successful shop in Mt Gambier.

“The business is growing so I'm pleased with the way it has all gone,” says Tim, 47, pictured, who runs Swallow Drive Meat Supply with another butcher and an apprentice.

Tim's apprenticeship was with award-winning Mt Gambier butcher Mick Lamond at Collins Court Butcher. He received extra in-store training from Trevor Eden of William Angliss Institute.

Trevor says, “When Tim began his apprenticeship in March 2016 at age 41, he was William Angliss's oldest-ever butchery apprentice.

“He has progressed very well, proving that you don't have to be a teenager to begin an apprenticeship. He has set a great example for people thinking of taking up mature-age apprenticeships.”

Tim hails from a crayfishing-family based at Carpenter Rocks, 35km south-west of Mt Gambier.

He says he “naturally” became a crayfisherman, following the lead of his grandfather, father, uncles and cousins.

“I was a fisherman for 25 years and skippered my own boat for 10 years, but increasing operating costs and decreasing returns made it hard,” Tim says.

“I'd known Mick (Lamond) for years and, when one of his apprentices went on leave, he asked if I could do deliveries for him and generally help out.

“I'd go fishing at 2.30am and I'd be finished in time to get up to Mick's shop by 9am. I ended up working full days with Mick, on top of fishing.

“I ended up helping out for seven or eight months and Mick



Tim's sea change

asked if I'd like to do an apprenticeship. He was offering me a career change and I grabbed it.

“I've always loved food and I've always loved butcher shops.

“When I was 10 or 11, I used to love going to a family friend's butcher shop in Mt Gambier, helping out in holidays and on Saturdays.

“I wanted to be a butcher way back then and now, all these years later, that's how it has turned out.”

A family man with youngsters aged 16, 14 and six, Tim purchased Swallow Drive Meat Supply near Mt Gambier's

famous Blue Lake a few months after completing his apprenticeship in 2019.

A butcher shop has been here for 60 years and now shares the site with a small supermarket, hairdresser and laundromat.

“I bought the business from Trevor Stephen who ran a well-established shop for over 40 years. I saw the opportunity to freshen it up,” Tim says.

Trevor's butcher son Mick has stayed on with Tim. Second year apprentice Donny Gordon completes a team which supplies four independent supermarkets as well as the shop.

Tim has gone out of his way to add variety to the range. “I've always loved cooking and being creative in making different things,” he says.

His Pork, Apple & Fennel and Beef, Taco & Cheese sausages have proved hits, as have his Angus Beef and Angus With Pepper burgers.

A key addition has been a cabinet, prominent at the shop's entrance, for fresh seafood from the South-East and nearby Victoria.

The seafood range varies from garfish and pink ling to prawns and scallops as well as shark and crayfish from Tim's relatives at Carpenter Rocks.

The crayfish industry has struggled in recent years with rising costs as well as reduced prices after China stopped buying Australian crays.

“It has been getting harder for the fishermen,” Tim says.

“I miss some things, like the stunning sunrises, but I'm pleased to be a butcher now.”

