



Lissa Fox with a new tray sealer at Angle Vale Wholesale Meats where a chef helps create delicious ready meals.

WINNERS *for* DINNERS

Butchers rush MBL solution for ready meals

Independent butchers have embraced a cost-effective MBL package which makes it easy to tap into the increasingly-popular ready meals market.

A “starter kit” of a benchtop sealer, premium CPET trays and film sold out in four days, prompting an MBL trip to China to successfully negotiate an extended supply deal with the sealer manufacturer.

MBL offered the package for under \$1,200. Butchers who snapped it up have enthusiastically begun developing quality ready meals, including stir fries, roasts, lasagne, casseroles and curries.

“Butchers flocked to the package, making it one of MBL’s most successful initiatives,” says Merchandise Division General Manager Bexley Carman.

“We developed this package to add another string to the bow of butcher shops, and it’s encouraging that butchers have responded so positively.

“There has been an explosion in ready meals and independent butchers have largely been missing out to supermarkets and food manufacturers.”

Butchers have praised the manual sealer as easy to operate, saying its compactness ideally suits benchtops in small work areas.

MBL Machinery Manager Chris Mountford says, “It’s a simple machine that’s simple to operate – it’s certainly not rocket science.

Continued page 3

New \$30,000 tax break covers smoke ovens – page 2

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Smoke ovens are among larger equipment to become more affordable now that the instant asset tax write-off has further increased to \$30,000.

"The increase means that bigger, more expensive items such as smoke ovens are covered under the tax incentive," says MBL Machinery Manager Chris Mountford.

"The tax break, coupled with MBL's interest free terms to approved applicants, makes purchasing a smoke oven really worth considering.

"Smoke ovens are expensive items (commonly between \$25,000 and \$30,000) but they can transform a business by expanding the product range.

"A shop can move into making its own smallgoods."

The new \$30,000 instant tax write-off was announced in the Federal Budget on April 2 and will continue until June 30, 2020.

Under the scheme, small

\$30,000

TAX BREAK RISES TO COVER SMOKE OVENS

businesses with turnover of under \$10 million can upgrade equipment and can claim up to \$30,000 at their next tax return rather than having to depreciate the item over a number of years.

Any number of purchases for under \$30,000 each can be made, and each can be instantly written off.

MBL members and customers should consult their accountants for specific advice.

Particular attention must be paid at tax time to the exact date on which purchases were made because the amount of the write-off has increased twice this financial year.

It was \$20,000 until January 29 when it rose to \$25,000 before increasing again to \$30,000 from April 2.

Chris Mountford says, "The

increased tax break opens the door for butchers and others who may have been putting off larger machinery upgrades to seriously consider buying.

"There's certainly never been a better time to buy new machinery and other equipment from MBL."

MBL always delivers competitive prices thanks to our buying power, and members also receive the annual rebate.

Ikon Pack's rice gift to 500 Thai workers

MBL and five other businesses behind the Ikon Pack brand have donated 5kg bags of rice and other foodstuffs to Thai factory workers who produce assorted Ikon products.

The goodwill gesture was much appreciated as 5kg of rice goes a long way in Thailand, lasting an average family for three to four weeks.

As well as rice, each worker was given a tin of mackerel, a bottle of cooking oil, a pack of instant noodles and 1kg of sugar.

"Ikon is the main export customer for PP Packaging Co Ltd, a family-owned business that employs 500 local people," says MBL's Merchandise Division General Manager Bexley Carman.

"The workers are on very basic wages and the owners take great care to employ hard work-

iKON
pack

ing and conscientious people.

"We view this business as an extension of our own because we work with them on a daily basis as the main Thai factory that manufactures our products.

"We wanted to give a little back by showing we are invested in this business and we care about them – we're not just another distant customer."

The gifts were given to workers as they broke up for their New Year celebration, which is in early April in Thailand.

"The factory's owners hold a big breakup party when the

factory closes for the New Year holidays, making it an appropriate time to give the gifts," Bexley says.

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WINNERS *for* DINNERS

“The feedback from butchers is very positive. I have not heard of any problems.

“Conditions are tough for butchers just now and this opens a new channel for their businesses.”

MBL formulated the package deal – a sealer, about 300 trays and 500m of film - when the first 16 sealers arrived from China. Another 32 have been ordered.

“After the first 16 sold quickly, I visited the Chinese factory. Work began on the next 32 when I was there,” Chris says.

A key to MBL’s foray into the ready meals sector came when we secured premium CPET (Crystalline Polyethylene Terephthalate) trays, made with cutting-edge technology in Israel.

CPET trays offer supreme convenience, allowing meals to be cooked, refrigerated or frozen before being heated in microwave or conventional ovens – all in the same container.

This is possible because CPET trays can be used within a temperature range of minus 40C to plus 220C, giving amazing versatility for a broad range food.

While the trays are ideal for cooked meals, they equally accommodate uncooked products, giving an extended shelf life (if gas flushed).

The trays are also fully recyclable, going direct into kerbside recycling ahead of legislation which will compel all packaging to be reusable, biodegradable or recyclable by 2025.

One of the first to purchase MBL’s ready meals package was Angle Vale Wholesale Meats where Brett Heaslip reports a positive customer response.

“We’ve found that the trays are excellent and the sealer is easy to use. People say our meals are delicious,” Brett says.

“We’re focusing on busy people who enjoy the convenience of being able to quickly heat or cook meals in the trays.

“Our business is based on quality meat and our meals are also quality. We have a chef, Warwick Fox, who advises us and has helped us form a menu.”

Among his popular meals are:

- Beef stroganoff with sliced mushrooms, sliced onions and hoisin coconut cream
- Sweet and sour pork with vegetables and noodles.



MBL’s Bexley Carman and packaging expert Mal MacDowell inspect CPET trays.

- Thai green curry chicken with vegetables, and
- Diced beef casserole with potatoes and vegetables.

Wilson Lowe has been experimenting with the MBL package for assorted meals, including lasagne, at Bruce’s Meat, Mt Barker.

“We are finding the trays and the sealer are very good although we’re only really just starting to explore the possibilities,” Wilson says.

He says careful display of the food in the trays will be important so that customers can readily see the contents.



The sealer is compact and easy to use.

“For example, people need to easily see what vegetables are part of a particular meal,” he says.

“We have big plans for these trays; we’ll get there after some experimentation.”

Other butchers say they are also in the early stages of becoming familiar with the equipment and choosing the best meals to prepare.

Butchers at Stirling Variety Meats began testing simple curries before considering other more adventurous meals.

MBL secured the trays through the Ikon Pack buying group whose Melbourne-based packaging expert Mal MacDowell has been advising MBL staff.

He says butchers’ reputations for quality products puts them in good stead to do well with ready meals.

“I trust my butcher so it follows that I would trust his ready meals. The credibility is already there, giving butchers a head start,” Mal says.

Mal says among the big advantages of CPET trays is that they retain the freshness and integrity of meals.

“Everyone knows the poor result of microwaving a pie. Crispness is lost. It’s the same for good meals carefully made well with fresh ingredients – they tend to come out of the microwave as slop,” he says.

“Now with CPET trays, butchers and other meal makers can be confident that consumers can enjoy good meals the way they were made to be enjoyed.”



Location, location, location

MARK'S THRIVING IN HIS THIRD SHOP IN THREE YEARS AT THE ONE CENTRE

The landlord tapped Mark Richardson on the shoulder just as he was reaping the rewards from working hard to triple the turnover of Brighton City Meats.

Mark had totally renovated a rundown butchery at Brighton Central shopping

centre and turned it into a thriving operation over six years, underpinned by quality beef from his Fleurieu Peninsula farm.

Then came news that the shopping centre would be demolished and rebuilt around a huge supermarket – but the centre's

management was unsure whether to invite Mark's butchery into the new complex.

Against the odds, Mark and his team dug in their heels to win a place in the complex and create a huge impression with their custom-built new shop.

Old customers have stayed loyal and new ones have been attracted, thanks to greatly increased passing foot traffic at the flash new shopping centre.

But while the new complex was being built, Mark had to survive 11 frustrating months of running a scaled-down business in a shipping container on the construction site.

In the space of three years, he operated in three places on the same site – in his old shop followed by the shipping container and finally the new shop.

"It's been a long haul but it's been well worth it. It was a case of going backwards to go forwards," says Mark, 55, who runs the business with three sons.

"Everything was up in the air when 



Delivery time... butchers converge when the latest merchandise arrives from MBL.

➤ the owners announced they'd build a new centre. We initially didn't know if we'd be part of it.

"We saw opportunities to move to a surrounding suburb, but location is a big thing and we had established ourselves at Brighton Central.

"We had taken over a tired, dark shop that had been there for 50 years. We totally renovated it and we developed a core of loyal customers.

"But in 2016 when plans for the new centre were announced, the management didn't realise how big we had become. We had grown a lot over six years – bigger than I could ever have imagined.

"They surveyed customers to see which shops people wanted retained in the new centre and our name kept coming up.

"In the end, they kept us because they realised that we were a strong trader. During construction, we were able to keep trading in temporary premises."

Mark kept trading in the old shop until vacating on December 31, 2016.

"We took two days to clean up the old shop and set up the new one in a refrigerated shipping container with a small verandah out front and a portable hut at the side. We lost only one day's trading," he says.



Kris Richardson with beef from the family farm. That's him on the screen behind, showing the process of breaking a carcass.

"We were put on a corner of the site. Then the car park went and there was just gravel around us...

"Trade initially dropped by 35%. We paid reduced rent and we didn't have to pay for electricity, but I had to let two staff go and they found jobs elsewhere.

"I ran the place with two sons and an

apprentice. We had to ease back from seven days trading to six."

While conditions were very testing, Mark says he was buoyed by the loyalty of a solid core of customers wanting to support an independent, family business.

"We knew we'd retain them at the new shop and we'd grow by attracting new customers drawn to the new centre. That's how it has worked out," he says.

He says the rent has doubled but this is justified by a huge increase in passing foot traffic.

The new shop is centrally located inside a mall near an impressive Foodland and other food shops, while the old shop was tucked away outside on the edge of a car park.

It is slightly bigger (84 square metres compared to the old shop's 72 square metres) and Mark has designed it for maximum efficiency.

"We wanted a shop where we can see everybody (customers) and everybody can see us," he says.

"We can have up to six people serving on Saturdays and there needs to be easy movement from the working area out to the counter."

Continued page 10



'It's been a long haul but it's been well worth it. It was a case of going backwards to go forwards' – Mark Richardson

Customers who became firm friends, former staff and assorted industry figures gathered to celebrate Lou and Lynne Zammit's 30 years at Windsor Meats. The immaculate Malvern shop took on a party atmosphere on Saturday, March 30, with giveaways, tastings and a sausage sizzle. Old friendships were refreshed and stories told, including Lou's recount of an unsavoury boyhood incident which later helped shape him as a butcher.

LOU'S LESSON (on how *not* to treat people)

As a lad of about 10, Lou Zammit was "starving" after a long bike ride with a mate and his thoughts turned to fritz.

"Knowing that butchers gave away fritz, I had the bright idea of stopping at a butcher shop and asking for some," Lou recalls.

"But old Jack the butcher turned out to be an old grump and he chased me out of the shop!"

The shop was Windsor Meats at Malvern which, by delicious irony, was purchased some 20 years later by Lou and Lynne, in 1989.

Working tirelessly, the couple turned a rundown shop into one of Adelaide's finest butcheries, renowned for quality and service over the past 30 years.

Looking back to his boyhood clash with old Jack, Lou says, "It was a simple lesson I've always remembered about the importance of customer service.

"I would have loved to have told old Jack that one day I'd end up owning his business and doing a much better job of running it than he ever did."

Lou went on to become the quintessential friendly butcher who always offered fritz slices or his little fritz franks to wide-eyed children.

On the rare occasions when he



Lou and Lynne Zammit... made personal service their catchcry to build customer loyalty.

ran out, he'd write an I Owe You for double fritz next time – and he always kept his word.

"Some of the children are now parents who bring their kids in for fritz. It's nice," Lou says.

Personal service has been Lou and Lynne's catchcry. Along the way, they developed firm, long term friendships with many loyal customers.

Lynne, who chaired AMIC's SA Retail Council for more than a decade, says, "We always told staff to treat customers like family because you'll spend more time here than with your own family.



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

The Zammit's rapport with loyal customers often extended to cooking and delivering meals to

those who had just had babies or were sick.

It's a tradition which continues although Lou is now semi-retired and Lynne eased her workload 10 years ago. They have handed control to their protege and former apprentice Sam Burt.

Sam, 31, who has gradually built his ownership share to 80% under a structured succession plan, says he carefully "maintains the culture" established by the Zammits.

"We're continuing a tradition of quality and >

'I would have loved to have told old Jack that one day I'd end up owning his business and doing a much better job of running it than he ever did' – Lou Zammit

service that generates strong customer loyalty,” says Sam, who organised the recent 30th anniversary celebrations.

Around the time of the celebrations, Sam heard of a customer’s husband being in a coma after a bicycle accident. He organised and delivered a substantial food package for the customer and her teenagers.

“We know the family; it was the least we could do to help,” he says.

Lou, 61, says his work ethic in his 48 years in the meat industry is rooted in his background. His parents migrated from Malta with their five children.

“Mum and Dad worked very hard but we never had much money. I realised the only way to get things other kids had was to work,” he says.

Lou’s mum was a customer at Goodwood Quality Meats where she persuaded Mick Hammond to hire Lou as a clean-up boy at age 11.

It’s a wonder Lou hadn’t been put off butchers for life after his encounter with old Jack only a



Lynne pictured in 2011, with Lou in the background.

year earlier, but he was driven by a desire to earn some money.

“I’d get there at 5am and cook breakfasts of T-bones for the butchers and I’d wash dishes. Then I’d return straight after school,” Lou recalls.

“I worked there for about 20 to 30 hours weekly. Mick said he had never seen a young boy work as hard and he took me on as an apprentice when I was 15.

“I enjoyed the work and the comradery; I just loved it. I knew I was lucky to be trained by an expert like Mick. He was a

wonderful man, a legend at Goodwood for over 40 years.

“Mick was my second dad. He taught me really good values about customer service and quality control.”

Lynne says developing trust was another key element which the couple applied to Windsor Meats.

“Trust, the biggest asset you can have in business, is paramount. We built relationships with our customers. Trust is fantastic and invaluable,” she says.

“When we purchased the business, it had become very run down, bordering on going broke.

“Neither of us had any money left as we were both going

through messy divorces so starting a business that was losing money was devastating.

“It was very tough. We would be lucky to earn \$100 a week between us and the shop’s equipment was ancient so everything was nurtured.

“But we had belief and as hard as it was, we never doubted we would be successful. We never lost sight of what we wanted to achieve.”

Lou sold his car and borrowed a friend’s bike to ride to work.

“This gave us a second-hand slicer and enough money for a bond on a house to rent,” Lynne says.

“We had four kids between us and they used to sleep on a mattress in the shop while we worked into the night before going home.”

Lou says, “In the first five years, I reckon I had a week off. I figured out I was working over 80 hours a week for 93 cents an hour.”

Lynne says, “We signed up with MBL when we started. MBL has been very good for us over the 30 years.”

Lou says, “I love looking outside the square and Lynne being a passionate cook made it easier.”

Continued page 10



Lou says he was lucky to be taught “really good values” by Goodwood’s Mick Hammond, pictured above in 2010.



From the album... the Zammits on their Harley Davidson.

After almost a decade, Warradale butchers Jason Bradley and Bill Smith are still receiving positive feedback from their appearances on national TV with chef Poh Ling Yeow.

Poh, wanting to learn more about meat, became the pair's "apprentice" for the full episode of the popular ABC-TV show *Poh's Kitchen* in 2010.

"The show keeps being repeated, not only in Australia but overseas. Our ugly mugs are still being seen and we keep getting good feedback," Jason says.

"We've had visitors to Adelaide who have come into the shop to see us after seeing the show in places like Bali, New Guinea and India. It's absolutely amazing."

Bill says, "I got a call from an old mate who now lives in New Zealand. He saw the show and called to say hello."

"The show was on Foxtel again just recently and we got quite a few comments from customers."

Jason says, "Poh was at the peak of her popularity in 2010 so we expected good feedback but we've been amazed how it has kept up for so long."

Long-time mates, the butchers reflected on the Poh phenomenon as they prepared for a July celebration of their 20-year partnership at Southern Cross Meats.

POH STILL LINGERS AS BILL AND JASON'S SHOW KEEPS ROLLING



Jason Bradley (left) and Bill Smith with chef Poh Ling Yeow on *Poh's Kitchen* in 2010.

They presently run the three-man shop with second year apprentice Beau Williams, the latest of 12 apprentices they have trained.

The shop has built loyal custom based on offering quality products backed by personal service with smiles and liberal doses of banter.

"We do things the old fashioned way and we're proud of it," Bill says.

Jason, 50, and Bill, 53, seem like

they've been friends forever. That's because they pretty much have been.

They met as teenagers at Somerton Surf Living Club and attended trade school together. They went their different ways as butchers before Bill joined Jason at the Warradale shop.

They remain heavily involved with the surf club. Both are life members and Jason is the club's Vice-President.

"Our kids have gone through

the club. We, as a business, are sponsors as a way of giving back to the community," Jason says.

Jason, who pursued butchery at the suggestion of a school teacher, did his apprenticeship at Southern Cross Meats at its original location on Dunrobin Rd, Warradale.

He completed his apprenticeship and purchased the business in 1989. He later moved it "down the road" to its present location on busier Diagonal Rd.

"I still have customers from when I was an apprentice of 15. You get to know people over time and you go on auto pilot, knowing what they want," Jason says.

"Bill did some work for me on Saturdays and then we became business partners 20 years ago."

"Customers sometimes want to know the 'secret' of Bill and I successfully working together as mates for so long."

"All I say is that we can have different opinions but when we do have disagreements, we get over them and move on straight away." ➤



Bill Smith has become friends with many loyal customers who enjoy returning the banter.



Bill (left) and Jason say they're constantly amazed that their "ugly mugs" still keep turning up on TV around the world.

➤ "I live just five minutes away and I work in a job I love with my best mate - how good is that?"

MLA initially recommended Bill and Jason to ABC-TV producers who quickly appreciated how the duo's easy rapport carried over onto the screen.

Here was everyone's idea of old school butchers – cheery souls, beaming smiles and quick banter underscoring expert knowledge.

Bill and Jason first appeared on TV on *Beat the Chef*, followed by briefly explaining cuts on *The Cook and The Chef* before a 10-minute spot on *Poh's Kitchen*, again explaining cuts.

Poh invited them back for an entire show on meat. She says she learnt a huge amount as their "apprentice for a day."

While they managed a few "plugs" for their business, they saw themselves as promoting the expertise of independent butchers everywhere.

"It was a 30-minute show and it involved filming in our shop for a full day plus another full day in the ABC studio," Bill says.

"We had a ball; it was full-on

but good fun. We put on a big barbecue out the back of the shop for the production crew.

"Customers loved it because they got involved. They took ownership, happy to tell people

that their butchers are on TV.

"But it wasn't until later when Poh had us back for a Christmas show that we fully realised that TV appearances actually got us customers.



Jason says, "I love being a butcher; I wouldn't do anything else."

"We made a turducken for Poh and we sold 40 of them that year. We got phone calls about it from all over Australia.

"One lady saw the show in Papua New Guinea and picked one up from our shop when she came to Adelaide, as did a bloke from Queensland."

Jason says they run a "pretty old school" shop. "We don't over-complicate it," he says.

"We listen to people and provide what they want. You have to evolve with the business otherwise you'll be sucked up.

"The emergence of home delivery meals has become the biggest enemy of independent butchers. You lose a lot of meat sales to them.

"It's hard work but I still love being a butcher; I wouldn't do anything else.

"Young lads need to understand that if you don't love butchery, you shouldn't get into it."

Bill says, "We'll be revamping the shop later this year. Hopefully, this will give us another 10 good years and that will probably be enough for us."

Location, location, location

From page 5

Cornerstones of the business are Mark's sons Jarrad, 29, Kris, 26, and Scott, 24. The eldest are qualified butchers who have worked with their father for years while Scott, a baker by trade, is doing his butchery apprenticeship.

Mark says "it's heaven" to work with his sons and to know that the business will stay in family hands.

He began as an apprentice butcher at Blackwood Country Meat where he spent 20 years, including 15 years as a partner in the business.

He has always wanted to own a farm and produce the finest beef to sell in his shop.

This became reality 11 years ago when he purchased a 140 acre (57 hectare) farm in rolling hills outside Mt Compass.



These days, Mark divides his time between working in the shop and on the farm, saying he enjoys the best of both worlds.

"While I always wanted to be a farmer, I didn't think I'd enjoy it so much. We run 20 or so milk and grass fed cows which produce beautiful 10-month-old beef for our shop," he says.

"We love our beef. We're passionate about it and pride ourselves on it. We guarantee what we sell."

The shop screens continuous videos of Mark's farm and how the cows live, right through to the shop's butchers processing the beef.

"We enjoy telling our story of where the

beef comes from and the ethics of how we produce it," Mark says.

"Customers love it. They say things like, 'It's true! That's really you up there on the screen!'"

"Ours is a genuine story at a time when more people want to know as much as they can about the meat they eat.

"People also love that we're a family business with good service, supplying quality meat and doing our best to help them turn it into delicious meals.

"We do a lot of slicing and dicing. We ask what customers are cooking so we'll cut the meat to suit, in the amount they want, to make cooking easy."

From page 7

One example is how Lynne developed mince with zucchini for meatballs as a way to "con" kids into eating a vegetable.

It proved a hit and evolved for use in the shop's meatloaf and sausage rolls.

Sam says, "Today, mince with zucchini is one of our biggest sellers. It's a fantastic, versatile product. We'd sell 30kg-40kg of it daily."

While Sam maintains tradition throughout, he also moves with the times by developing convenient pan or oven ready products and cooked meals.

"Lou remains a great mentor. He helps out at Christmas and Easter or when I have some leave," he says.

Lou says, "I started easing back on work five years ago but I still like to come in and connect with people, doing things like the annual Pink Butcher barbecue.

"Some time ago, three close friends died within a short space of time, making us realise that we need to smell the roses and do things while we still can. We travel a lot."

Lynne grins, "We're SKI-ing... Spending the Kids' Inheritance."

Lou and Lynne's 30 years



Lou and Lynne with Sam Burt, their protege and majority owner of Windsor Meats.

She says an "amazing highlight" was the Mont Blanc Hiking Tour across the mountains of France, Italy and Switzerland.

In recent years, Lou has kayaked in Antarctica and mountain biked in Cuba and Mongolia.

Their 2019 travels include two months in Canada, four weeks in Tasmania and three

weeks in Vietnam.

The couple also enjoy SA country trips, mainly to the South East, on their beloved Harley Davidson.

"We rode a Harley all the way across America, from east to west, on Route 66. The kids think we are ridiculous but we love it," Lynne says.

A TASTE FOR COMPETITION

Kiara Marrone is rattling up the frequent flyer points as she travels interstate for various butcher competitions, sharpening her skills along the way.

She's also making a habit of visiting as many interstate butcher shops as she can, seeing how they operate and picking up ideas from meeting butchers.

Improving her skills and overall knowledge is part of her plan to best equip herself to eventually open her own butcher shop.

"You need to explore what others are doing – you can take a little from different shops and incorporate them into your own," says Kiara, 26, who was SA's Apprentice of the Year in 2017.

"I've been to Sydney and Perth this year for competitions and I've learnt quite a few things.

"The Sydney shops I've seen tend to be more high-end. Every tray was full and every product was presented with a garnish.

"I saw some products presented in baking paper, ready for the oven.

"Perth shops also had different products with good displays.

"By comparison to Sydney and Perth, products and displays in Adelaide seem quite simple. We haven't caught up with the rest of the country in some ways.

"While they tend to be more high-end interstate, Adelaide people generally aren't ready for it and are still happy with steak and sausages."

In Perth, Kiara won a silver medal at the Lifeline International Young Butchers' Picnic against interstate butchers and some from the US, Ireland and New Zealand.

In three hours, she broke down a side of lamb, shoulder of pork and rump on the bone. She chose to make products seen at carnival food stalls.

Kiara's mission to improve her skills



Kiara Marrone at work at SA Gourmet Meats, Walkerville.



Kiara works away at the Perth competition.



Her presentation at the Sydney competition.

Among her creations were skewers, roasts, curries, stirfries and lamb mignon.

"We had to use everything so I made 5kg of sundried tomato and basil sausages, and I scattered coloured popcorn in the display for a carnival feeling," she says.

In Sydney, Kiara enjoyed taking part in a Meatstock event with

Goodwood butchers Paul Suleyman and Sam Biggins.

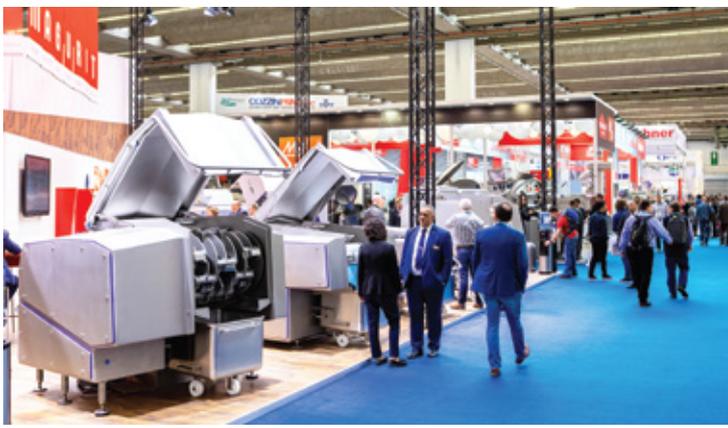
She later returned to Sydney for the national selection final for the young butchers' section of the World Butchers' Challenge in California next year.

Competitors had to make products from a shoulder of lamb, loin of pork and rump on the bone.

"It was an amazing experience. The diversity and high standard of products made was stunning," Kiara says.

Kiara went within two points of making the Australian team and, undeterred, she says she'll strive for the world challenge in Germany in 2022.

"It's all about networking and improving yourself," she says.



Scene at one of the large machinery pavilions.



Production time at one of the display kitchens.

Insights into trends at IFFA

More than 1,000 exhibitors displayed or demonstrated their goods to 67,000 visitors at IFFA 2019, the world's biggest meat industry trade fair, in Frankfurt, Germany, in May.

Trade visitors from 149 countries attended and such was the interest from Australia that we were in the top 10 countries in terms of visitor numbers.

To ensure MBL keeps abreast of worldwide developments, the Co-op was represented by Merchandise Division General Manager Bexley Carman, Purchasing Manager David Curtis and Sales Manager Dale Rowe.

MBL's Proteins Division was also represented, with CEO Warren McLean attending mainly to meet with specialists in the rendering area.

The MBL merchandise team was given insights into emerging trends across all areas of the meat industry, from processing to retail developments including labelling and food safety.

"IFFA is held every three years and is well worth attending as it gives valuable insights

into all aspects of the industry," Bexley says.

"If you're not there to see the innovations and trends, you simply don't get a proper handle on how the trade is developing.

"It's important that MBL keeps up to date with worldwide developments to ensure we make the best products available to our Members."

Bexley says IFFA's exhibits on packaging were of particular interest to MBL.

This follows the Federal Government's announcement last year that all packaging in Australia must be reusable, biodegradable or recyclable by 2025.

"We're keeping a close eye on developments in packaging which is an important part of MBL's business," Bexley says.

"There are some very interesting packaging developments across the world, not just in cutting edge technology but keeping the price under control.

"For example, some biodegradable packaging is currently three times more expensive

than conventional packaging but technology is merging to level the cost.

"Broadly, we need to keep an eye on packaging developments across a number of continents to ensure we make the right purchasing decisions."

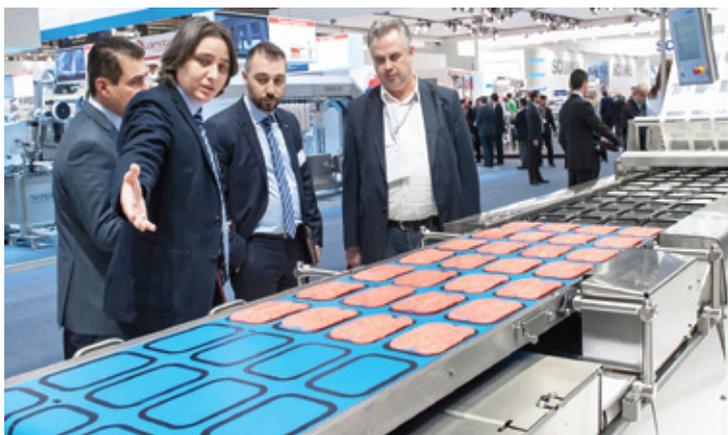
In a statement to conclude the trade fair, IFFA said, "The significance of meat and traditional butchers in society remains very high.

"Traditional butchers score with consumers by offering quality and regional products.

"Innovative sales concepts, such as online shops, clever catering ideas and customer communications via social media are making the trade fit for the future."

IFFA said a shortage of skilled personnel and trainee problems were common challenges across the wider meat industry.

"Companies must invest more in digitalisation, automation and robot technology to lift the load from employees and simplify all meat processing stages," IFFA said in its statement.



A demonstration of packaging sliced smallgoods.



A head-turning display in the dry ageing section.