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Issue 96 - 2016

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(see page 7)**



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Editor:
Barrie Parsons
0413 706 236
barrie@butchersvoice.com.au

Advertising Enquiries:

Barrie Parsons
0413 706 236
barrie@butchersvoice.com.au

Mail Address:

The Editor
The Australian Butchers'Voice
P.O. Box 814, Caringbah NSW 2229

Production Enquiries:

Handstand Graphics
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info@handstand.com.au
www.handstand.com.au

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Vital news & information for independent retail butchers

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Value-added answer to high prices

The rising price of beef is giving many butchers a headache as they try to convince their customers that the increases are out of their control.

The fact that the major supermarkets are involved in a red meat 'price war' doesn't make life any easier for the independent retailer.

Cattle prices have hit a record high as surging international demand for quality Australian beef combine with droughts – here and overseas – to push up prices.

The price hikes have been attributed to surging demand in the US, China and other Asian markets.

Australia exports about 70 per cent of all beef produced and demand is expected to strengthen with the fall in the Aussie dollar.

Severe drought in parts of the US has hit American cattle producers hard and lifted demand and prices for Australian beef.

Severe drought in cattle-producing districts of northern Australia has also reduced herd sizes, leading to less cattle being available for market.

Of course, consumers don't really care about the reasons behind the higher prices. For many people on a budget, the main concern is their decision to buy less of the better cuts of red meat or switch to much cheaper 'white' meat.

From all reports, it seems beef prices will remain high for some time so the pressure will be on for butchers to keep their prices in check while maintaining profitable margins.

Butchers will need to be even more creative when it comes to their product offering.

As one butcher told a Melbourne newspaper recently: "I don't rely on T-bone steaks and eye fillets any more - we do pies and sausage rolls; we do panko crumbed schnitzels and parmigiana; we do delicious lamb Tuscan burgers ... and we value the whole carcass.

"People are eating differently, due to the prices, so we've changed to fit in with them — it's called value-adding, and it does work," he said.

Regards
Barrie Parsons



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NEWS & VIEWS

Burnie butcher rules

Top-rating reality TV show My Kitchen Rules paid a visit to Tasmania recently to profile a couple for the next series.

The MKR cameras were spotted at a butchery in Burnie and award-winning Wivenhoe butcher Clint Sharman confirmed the cameras were at his shop to film a segment for the show.

"It was all pretty quick," Clint said.



▲ Wivenhoe butcher Clint Sharman is featured in the next series of My Kitchen Rules.

"The cameras were here for about 35 minutes to shoot (the contestants). They did a couple of takes as they purchased some dry-aged scotch fillet.

"It was a small production crew. There was a bit of a conversation on camera as I explained the cut of the meat which comes from the Angus steers my dad grows at our farm," he told the Burnie Advocate.

High beef prices taking their toll

Record high beef prices, driven by export demand and a shortage of stock due to previous droughts, are being blamed for pushing more butchers out of business.

While higher beef and lamb prices have always put pressure on retail butchers, supermarket price wars are also taking their toll.

Kane Arnold, who runs Arnold Family Butchers in Boort, Victoria, said he would not be surprised if some butchers closed due to high beef prices.

"Compared to 15 months ago, we're paying \$400 more for a beef carcass and we have had to push our value-added products to cover that margin," Kane told the Weekly Times.

"We are still selling the same amount of beef but it's more of the cheaper cuts now, like mince beef and rump over eye fillet."

Cameron Kempt, who manages Central West Butchers at Braybrook in Melbourne's west, said butchers started to cut back on casual and part-time employees about 18 months ago to cope with beef price increases.

"This meant butchers could save money on



▲ Braybrook butcher Cameron Kempt.

things like holiday pay and superannuation, and some started doing boxed beef instead, but I've seen more of a swing away from this recently, with the boxed beef costing just as much as an employee," he said.

"We are selling a lot less beef and have customers commenting on it all the time. They're buying chicken instead," he said.

Gordon Stabb, who runs a butcher shop at Anglesea, said he had introduced a small amount of bulk boxed beef to cope with the price increases.

"It depends on the time of the year for us because during the summer holidays we do get a broad range of consumers here and ones who are happy to pay for eye fillet steak," Gordon said.

"But it's not just affecting butchers and I don't see how processors can be making any money from beef," he said.

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equipment into major supermarket groups in Australia.

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Rollex will be exhibiting its full range of software and equipment at Fine Food Expo in Melbourne (September 12-15). Rollex can be contacted on contact on

1300 943 947 or via the website **www.rollex.com.au**.

Robot meat processors at work

Global meat-packing company JBS is experimenting with robots on the production line at its Colorado processing plant in the US.

In order to automate the processing of the meat, JBS has invested in a New Zealand robot company called Scott Technology. According to a recent news report, automating production would trim the \$100 million that JBS pays to its employees every year.

The problem is that robots aren't nearly as good at people when it comes to dismembering a carcass, and this is especially so for beef, which varies more than other animals like pigs and lambs. A human can slip a knife between a bone and a muscle and gently ease the two apart, working more on feel than sight. It's delicate work.

Robots are much less adaptive and better-suited to repetitive, identical tasks, like those involved in building a car. And when meat is sold per-pound, you want to leave as little as possible on the bone.

That's why JBS has bought a controlling share in Scott Technology. It wants to improve robots to the level where they can replace human butchers, but will most likely start testing them on pork and lamb, which are easier to process.



For the love of snags

When it comes to making a traditional Australian beef sausage, all you need is love according Orange butcher Michael Nunn.

Michael, who works at Woodward Street Quality Meats, has been making beef sausages for close to five decades.

His sausages won their division at the Central West regional Sausage King contest.

Michael said the recipe was handed down through generations with his dad teaching him.

"They're made with love," Michael told the Central Western Daily.

"It's not just a sausage, it's a balancing act to make sure it's right," he said.

A keen fan of a sausage sandwich, Mr Nunn said he was careful to balance texture, flavour, water and the fat content.

"Too lean and they're too dry, too fatty and people don't like them," he said.

As well as winning the beef sausage category, Woodward Street Quality Meats placed second with their traditional Australian pork sausages.

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Stand HM14

Back with the best banger

Clarence Town's tiny butcher shop, which has stood on a corner of a wide main street for almost 100 years, is now the centre of the universe for butcher Ethan Patfield.

After taking ownership of the town's butchery recently, Ethan's thin, traditional Australian sausages have been named the best in the Hunter region in the 2016 Sausage King competition.

"The traditional Australian category is the cream of the crop," he said. "It's the one every butcher wants to win because it's your day-to-day sausage. It's not a one-off. It's the one you sell all day."

At age 13, Ethan was working his first job as a clean-up boy at the shop.

The butcher who owned the place at the time was using a sausage recipe that went back at least 60 years. Generations of residents had



▲ Clarence Town butcher Ethan Patfield.

eaten those sausages – and Ethan was a big fan as well.

When he turned 16, he was told the shop couldn't offer him an apprenticeship in the line of work he'd fallen in love with.

"I made a promise to myself that day," he said. "I walked out of there and said I'm going to buy this butcher shop," he told the local paper.

For a decade he honed his craft at Raymond Terrace, working his way up to manager and saved his money to invest in his own business.

Secret to sausage success



▲ Forbes butchers Luke Byrnes, Dean Behsman and Shannon Bermingham

Forbes butcher Shannon Bermingham – a former Parkes butcher – says the secret to a quality sausage is good quality meat – including good local lamb – and good herbs and spices.

Forbes Central Butchery won the continental category in this year's Sausage King competition with its German brattwurst and Australian lamb sausage with tandoori lamb.

This year their hot Italian sausage shared second place honours in the continental category.

Shannon relocated to Forbes seven months ago after operating for a number of years as Parkes Central Butchery.

Judge Richard Taylor said there were more than 65 entries received from Mudgee, Gulgong, Gilgandra, Dubbo, Forbes, Orange, Bathurst and Narromine.

Creations entered included Hawaiian, sweet chili and mango, Mexican, Kakadu plum, duck and blackberry and pork.

The state final is being held on Saturday, September 24 at the Bathurst Farmer's Market. State winners will then proceed to the National Sausage King finals to be held in Tasmania on February 11, 2017 where they will compete against other state winners.

Rocky road to success



▲ Kev Brown with his award-winning snags.

Rockhampton butcher Kev Brown was a guest on local radio following his success in the regional round of the Sausage King and Best Burger competition, held in Mackay and Rockhampton.

Kev is no stranger to the battle for the best sausage, having sold thousands from his shop over the past 28 years.

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Red meat still popular despite higher prices

Meat continues to be the meal of choice for Australians, who are spending \$378 million a week on meat to cook at home

Figures released by discount supermarket chain Aldi show the average Australian household cooks four-and-a-half meat meals each week, spending around \$46.

According to the Galaxy Research poll, chicken is the highest-ranked meat in Australia, with 47 per cent of the nation ranking it as their favourite.

An Aldi spokesperson said the results showed Australians were "looking for better value [and] wanting to squeeze more meat into their weekly grocery budget without having to compromise on quality."

Lamb is most popular in NSW, while Western Australia has a greater taste for pork than anywhere else in the country.

The ACT has the biggest appetite for meat, with just over half of respondents eating five or more meat-based meals a week.

In Bondi Junction in Sydney's east owner of The Meat Store Peter Ilic said he was aware when price wars took place, but he did not follow them too closely.

"We always go back to what we are doing in our own stores, rather than trying to compete with businesses so much bigger than ours," he told The Land.

"We are a small family business. We serve 3000 customers a week in our [two] stores. Their margins are much bigger than ours but we still manage to sell at a price that matches theirs, quality for quality."

Peter said his customers continued to tend towards lamb and free-range pork, due to the on-going high price of beef.



▲ Bondi Junction butcher Peter Ilic.

In the four years of operating his stores, he says the biggest change has been the shift towards grass-fed meat.

"We now see a huge backlash against grain-fed beef. I think we are eating less meat, but consumers are a lot wiser in what they buy," he said, adding that transactions were smaller, but what customers purchased was "high grade".

Peter said at his store chicken is the least popular meat among customers, with beef the most popular, followed by lamb and then pork.

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A photograph of the XEIR 80-110 skewer machine in use. The machine is a light blue, boxy device with a hopper on top for meat and vegetables. Several skewers are shown being pushed through the machine, with the meat and vegetables being folded and pushed onto the skewers. The machine is sitting on a white surface, and there are bowls of meat and vegetables nearby.

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Industry stalwart enters new era – Woodward Foods Australia

When Robert H. Woodward founded a local meat processing business at the tender age of 16 servicing the Swan Hill area and surrounds, little did he know the seed of the legacy he had planted.

Driven by a passion for livestock and hunger to improve the quality of meat, the business grew to encompass a unique and diversified Australian meat business. From specialised breeding programs to a wholesale distribution network, spearheaded by Murray Valley Meat Trading Company.

Armed with a true 'paddock to plate' offering thanks to its unique integration and backed by five generations of expertise in the meat industry, the products developed a reputation among butchers and independent retailers for unwavering consistency and quality.

Formerly Swan Hill Abattoir, the business now acknowledges the foundation laid by Robert Woodward with the launch of its new brand and line of products under Woodward Foods Australia.

Chief Executive Chris Hadziliadis said that while the business has scaled dramatically since its humble beginnings, the 'Woodward' heritage and values holds a great deal of significance for the company and was at the heart of its rebrand.

"We are now a business 400 strong across the country on the brink of expanding internationally. While our business has transformed throughout its growth, it's always been in accordance with the Woodward family values that remain at its core. It's this approach - 'from our family to your family' - which gives our customers faith in the quality of our meat," he said.

Testament to this quality was Woodward Foods' success at the recent RASV Australian Food Awards, picking up the 'Best in Class medal' and 'Gold medal' awards in the branded lamb category for its Prime Lamb.

Woodward Foods new beef and lamb product and brand portfolio

- Woodward Foods Finest Beef is MSA graded and has a well-loved texture and flavour from its carefully balanced grass fed foundation, combined with grain assisted feed in some cases, to produce a consistently flavoursome and delicious eating experience
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- Woodward Foods Prime Lamb is MSA graded, nurtured by grazing on pastures and free of hormone growth promoters. It's quality where you can taste the difference. At this years prestigious RASV Australian Food Awards Prime Lamb was the recipient of the Best in Class medal and the winner of a Gold medal in the Branded Lamb category.

The rebrand itself will see a suite of new visual merchandise assets and resources including new logo, product packaging, website, marketing materials, social media presence and other consumer engagement.

"The biggest opportunity this rebrand gives our business is the ability to do more for our customers to help them grow their businesses through our marketing initiatives and educating end consumers," Hadziliadis added.

Over the coming months Woodward Foods will be rolling out a series of events and marketing initiatives to help butchers and independent retailers grow demand for premium, boutique meat products and offer their customers an unparalleled shopping experience.



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NEWS & VIEWS

Salt wall adds wow factor

Another British butcher shop hopes to be a cut above the rest with the installation of Himalayan salt wall.

The design, which is proving popular in the UK, is part of the Berkshire-butchers newly built beef dry-aging fridge, complete with high velocity fans and dehumidifiers to ensure no moisture is present.

At nine-by-three metres, Thatcham Butchers worked alongside Royale Refrigeration to make the fridge a reality.

"The fridge itself is going to be better than the majority of beef aging fridges out there because it's brand new, state-of-the-art," director Nigel Wilks told Meat Trades Journal.

Whereas there was nothing wrong with the previous fridge, the new one will offer the butchers the freedom to test how long cuts can be dry-aged for. Wilks explained that the business would aim to age meat for 21-28 days, but sometimes pushed this to 85 days.



"My idea here is that we will carry on with our 21-28 days but I will have a few customers who will want me to push things, and I'm going to push it. If I can 100-day dry-age beef for somebody and they want it, I'll do it. But it's like anything, it's about experimenting."

The idea of the Himalayan salt wall is not necessarily an essential piece of equipment, but more of a "concept".

"A lot of people say it's dry-aged beef. I want to try and build that story because that's what the chefs want to put on their menu. In the long run, it's obviously going to pay for itself but to pay the money I paid out, it's more a case of us staying ahead as a company," he said.

Dream job in Nyngan



▲ Brendan Hodges, employer Anthony Blake and high school principal Michael Gibson at Brendan's new work place.

Nyngan butcher Anthony Blake has given one of the small town's young men a "dream job" - an apprenticeship.

Brendan Hodges has always wanted to be a butcher and this year his dream came true when he was recently appointed Anthony's newest apprentice at Nyngan Quality Meats.

Despite being still of school age, local high school

principal, Michael Gibson, Anthony and Brendan's grandmother made his "dream job" become a reality.

Brendan was hired as an after school employee, progressing to pre-apprentice and now a fully-fledged apprentice.

Mr Gibson said it's been a great partnership between the school and a local business.

Those were the days

The small NSW town of Binalong – population 250 – is proving to be a popular destination for Canberra residents looking for some old-fashioned butcher service.

Long-time Binalong butcher Mick Dal Santo wraps their meat in butchers paper, newspaper, ties the bundle with string and passes it through a wire gauze window. "The oldies love it," he said.

Coaches of senior citizens have pulled over just to watch him snap off the string the way they remember it was always done.

"My supplier goes to butchers all over NSW and says I'm the only one that still bundles up the meat in paper and string," the Queanbeyan-born butcher told The Canberra Times.

Former owner Merv Spencer,



▲ Binalong butcher Mick Dal Santo and previous butcher 94-year-old Merv Spencer.

who worked in the peak of the bulk meat buying era, told the paper: "I rode 21 miles to Harden on my horse to bring stock here to slaughter. I was a slaughterman too. The only way out of Binalong back then was on a horse or a train. I rode out to Boorowa to bring back 300 wethers. Only me and one dog," he said.

The Spencers sprinkled sawdust on the floor to catch the fat, mixed good meat with flour, yam seasoning and salt for their sausages and made eyes at all the girls," he said.

Scot snags world record

An English butcher has broken the world record for linking sausages – 62 in one minute – smashing the previous record of 54 set earlier this year by a Scottish butcher.

Tim Brown, who runs a family butcher shop in Lancashire, linked up with casing makers Devro to have a tilt at the title.

Weeks of training on the sausage stuffing machine paid off when the heat was on in front of eight officials from the Guinness Book of World Records.

He said: "I've got to admit I was nervous. I hadn't realised I'd get nerves in my stomach doing something I've been doing for 25 years.

"I was out of my comfort zone



in as much as I was up in Glasgow and using sausage equipment which wasn't mine," he said.

"It's always more difficult when it's someone else's gear

"I actually did 64, although two were ruled out because they weren't quite the right size. And they stopped me a second early, so maybe I could have done better," he said.

"At a squeeze I think I'm good for 67. I've done that at home on my own equipment where I'm more comfortable."

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Blind date dilemma

Joe took his blind date to the carnival. "What would you like to do first, Kim?" asked Joe.

"I want to get weighed," she said. They ambled over to the weight guesser. He guessed 120 pounds. She got on the scale; it read 117 and she won a prize.

Next the couple went on the ferris wheel. When the ride was over, Joe again asked Kim what she would like to do. "I want to get weighed," she said.

Back to the weight guesser they went. Since they had been there before, he guessed her correct weight, and Joe lost his dollar.

The couple walked around the carnival and again he asked where to next. "I want to get weighed," she responded. By this time, Joe figured she was really weird and took her home early, dropping her off with a handshake.

Her roommate, Laura, asked her about the blind date, "How'd it go?" Kim responded, "Oh, Waura, it was wousy."

Bear at the bar

A bear walks into a bar and says to the bartender, "I'll have a pint of beer and a.... packet of peanuts."

The bartender asks, "Why the big pause?"

Distinguished service

My high school assignment was to ask a veteran about World War II. Since my father had served in New Guinea during the war, I chose him. After a few basic questions, I very gingerly asked, "Did you ever kill anyone?"

Dad got quiet. Then, in a soft voice, he said, "Probably. I was the cook."

Pecking order facts

If your name is on the building, you're rich; if your name is on your desk, you're middle-class; if your name is on your shirt, you're poor.

Charitable cause

A devastated-looking man knocks on the door of a woman known for her charity.

"Please, ma'am," he says when she opens up, "can you help this poor, tragic family down the block? The father just lost his job, and his wife is too ill to work. They're about to be turned out into the cold streets unless someone can pay their rent."

"That's the worst thing I've ever heard in my life!" says the woman.

"May I ask who you are?"

"Their landlord."

Monkey business

A gorilla walks into a bar and says, "A scotch on the rocks, please." The gorilla hands the bartender a \$10 bill.

The bartender thinks to himself, "This gorilla doesn't know the prices of drinks," and gives him 15 cents change.

The bartender says, "You



know, we don't get too many gorillas in here."

The gorilla replies, "Well, at \$9.85 a drink, I can see why."

Blonde convention

The leader of the Worldwide Blonde Association addresses the group's annual convention: "We are all here today to prove to the world that blondes are not stupid. Can I have a volunteer?"

A blonde gingerly works her way through the crowd and steps up to the stage.

The leader asks her, "What is 15 plus 15?"

After 15 or 20 seconds she says, "Eighteen!"

Obviously everyone is a little disappointed. Then 80,000 blondes start cheering, "Give her another chance! Give her another chance!"

The leader says, "Well since we've gone to the trouble of getting 80,000 of you in one place and we have the world- wide press and global broadcast media here, gee, uh, I guess we can give her another chance."

So he asks, "What is 5 plus 5?"

After nearly 30 seconds she eventually says, "Ninety?"

The leader is quite perplexed,

looks down and just lets out a dejected sigh -- everyone is disheartened - the blonde starts crying and the 80,000 girls begin to yell and wave their hands shouting, "GIVE HER ANOTHER CHANCE! GIVE HER ANOTHER CHANCE!"

The leader, unsure whether or not he is doing more harm than damage, eventually says, "Ok! Ok! Just one more chance -- What is 2 plus 2?"

The girl closes her eyes, and after a whole minute eventually says, "Four?"

Throughout the stadium pandemonium breaks out as all 80,000 girls jump to their feet, wave their arms, stomp their feet and scream...

"Give her another chance! Give her another chance!"

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