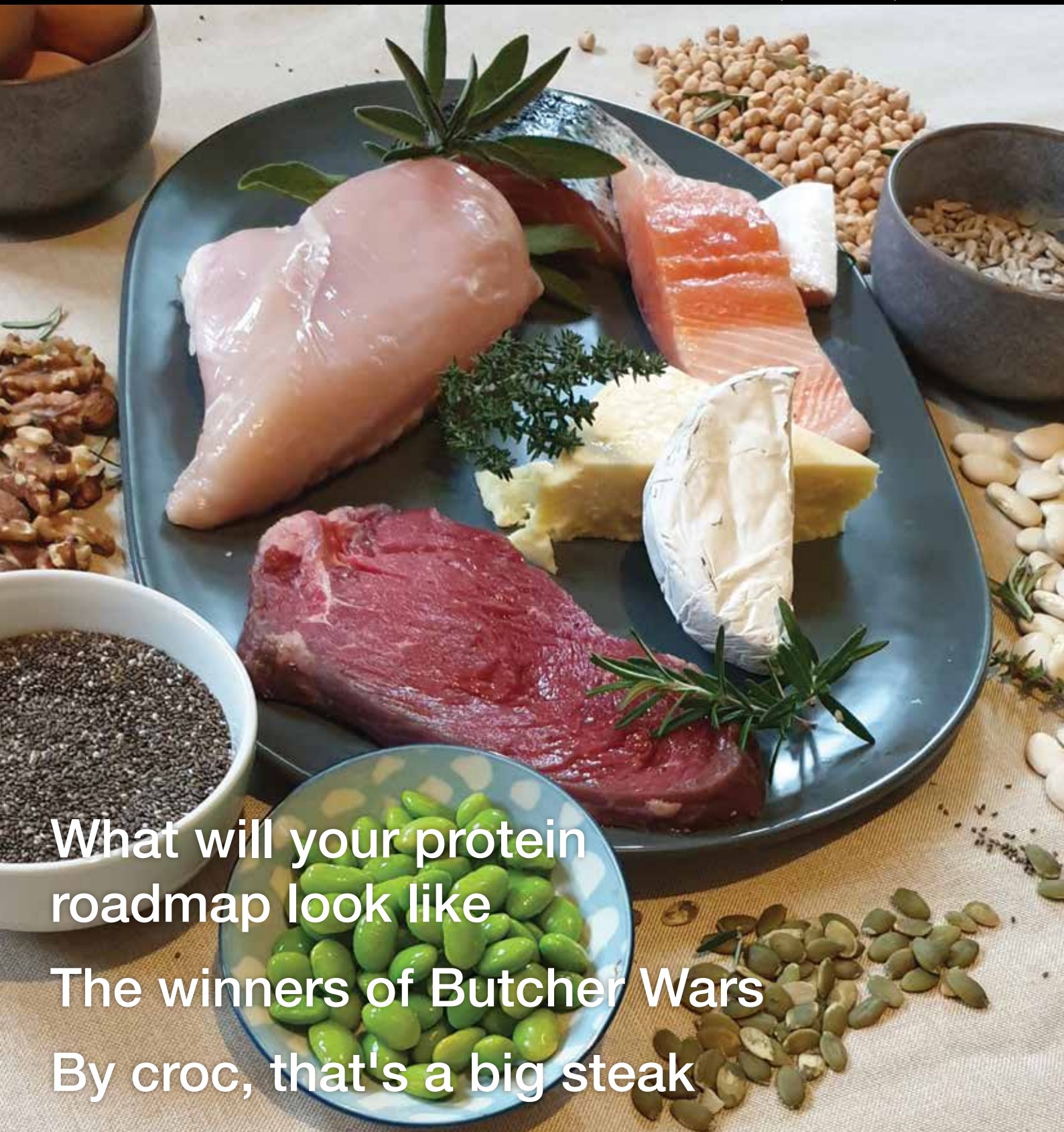


AUSTRALIAN MeatNews

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What will your protein
roadmap look like
The winners of Butcher Wars
By croc, that's a big steak



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Win a copy of *Fire to Fork*. See pages 10 & 35

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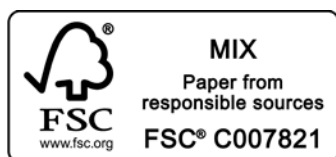
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*Australian Country
Choice Choir*

Choir for all cultures

The introduction of Pacific Island staff into the workforce of Australian meat processing plants is adding a new culture to the industry. Australian Country Choice celebrated this at Easter by supporting a performance of hymns, traditional songs and dances by about 40 labour hire employees at its Brisbane plant. It was the first public performance by the meatworks choir – possibly the only one of its kind in the world. The choir mostly comprises Samoan and Solomon Island employees, with some Australian and UK-born administration staff joining in. ACC also provides social BBQs and volleyball matches to help assimilate the new workers, recruited under the Pacific Island Labour Program. ■



Multivac new premises

New lodgings for Multivac

Packaging specialist Multivac recently relocated its busy Queensland premises to triple its floorspace ... and quickly filled the bigger warehouse.

Queensland state manager Niels Juel calls it Murphy's Law. "The funny thing is, we moved, we picked up big orders and now we've filled up the new warehouse," he said.

Operations now claim 1200 sq m, up from the 350 sq m it occupied previously; its 93 pallet spaces have grown to 520 spaces. "And it's full now," Niels said. "We simply outgrew the old facility."

The premises shift wasn't a big move, more of a mere hop from one side of the M1 freeway to the other. The shift from the southern Brisbane suburbs of Ormeau to Yatala meant moving a dizzying 2km.

An official opening of the premises is scheduled in the coming months. ■

ICMJ Northern Conference Rockhampton

More than 100 agriculture students and young industry professionals converged at the 2022 ICMJ Northern Conference in Rockhampton for four days of meat science education, beef industry insights and professional development.



Carcase breakdown

Hosted by Teys Australia and CQ University at Central Queensland Innovation and Research Precinct (CQIRP), participants took part in a wide range of sessions designed to enhance their understanding of the northern beef industry supply chain, develop their meat judging capabilities, and explore the career opportunities offered in the beef industry.

ICMJ Northern Committee Chair and Teys Australia's Ethan Mooney, said the program was designed to give participants a leg-up for a future career in the red meat sector.

"Participants heard directly from people like Mark Davies, Chair of the Australian Beef Sustainability Framework, about the future direction of the industry in terms of economic resilience, animal husbandry techniques, managing climate risk and the prosperity of rural and regional communities," Mr Mooney said.

"This high-level knowledge and understanding, combined with skills in meat cut identification and judging are critical for the future leaders of the red meat sector and we want to build the expertise of the next generation."

"ICMJ's mission is to inspire and develop future professionals in the global red-meat industry and this event is a big part of that," he said.

The Teys Australia carcass breakdown is a highlight of the program, along with the Career and Trade Expo where participants can meet and network with some of the beef industry's biggest employers.

"The Career and Trade Expo is a unique opportunity for students to connect with some of the biggest players in the northern beef sector and explore the wide range of career paths that it offers," Mr Mooney said.

The program includes practical hands-on workshops, an abattoir tour and the Teys Australia meat judging competition, culminating with the NH Foods Gala Dinner at the Rockhampton Customs House.



Mark Davies, chair of Australian Beef Sustainability Framework

The conference is also an opportunity for high achievers in the meat judging competition to be selected to participate in the 2023 ICMJ South-East Asia Tour.

The 2022 ICMJ Northern Conference is proudly sponsored by founding partners, Teys Australia and CQUniversity as well as NH Foods Australia, Advance Rockhampton, JBS, Beef Australia, Signature Beef, Herefords Australia, Australian Brahman Breeders Association and Allflex.

It is one of two major conferences held annually by ICMJ, with the 2022 ICMJ National Conference scheduled to be held in Wagga Wagga from 5-9 July. ■



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IFFA 2022 Germany: Technology for Meat and Alternative Proteins

This year's IFFA exhibition in Frankfurt am Main, Germany is the first to include a nod to alternative sources of protein. To be held 14-19 May, 2022, around 900 exhibitors are expected from more than 40 countries to show their latest products and solutions for processing, packaging and retail.

Trade visitors from the food industry, the butchers' trade, the retail trade, the hospitality industry and suppliers, hold the fair in high regard as the best source of information for the latest innovations and trends.

For the first time in its history of over 70 years, IFFA has expanded its product nomenclature and now includes technologies and solutions for vegetable-based meat substitutes and alternative proteins. At least 200 IFFA exhibitors offer products for the production of meat alternatives.

Wolfgang Marzin, President and Chief Executive Officer of Messe Frankfurt, says, "We are ready to welcome important players from the German and international meat and protein industry to IFFA 2022. Around 900 companies, including the market leaders, will be there and show the latest innovations on their impressive exhibition stands."



"The breadth and depth of the products and services to be seen is unrivalled and, this year, will once again generate a multitude of innovative impulses. With the new theme of alternative sources of protein, IFFA, the world's leading trade fair for the industry, not only sets the trend but also reflects current consumer behaviour." ■

Auspack 2022 returns to Melbourne

Auspack brings together the packaging industry in a conference and trade expo to showcase the latest innovations in food, beverage and pharmaceutical packaging products.

Held 17-20 May, 2022 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Auspack has attracted more than 350 exhibitors, and offers educational workshops, full conference program, and the APPMA Awards of Excellence.

Headlining the event is the Auspack business Leaders' Forum, which brings together the thought leaders, game changers and discussion on where the industry should be headed. Some of the topics under discussion include packaging sustainability, traceability, business trends and the food supply chain.

Well known food industry packaging specialists in attendance include Insignia, Heat and Control, Fuchs, Intralox and Wedderburn.

To register go to: <https://www.auspack.com.au/> ■

Andrews Choice makes smallgoods royalty



Andrew Vourvahakis, creator of smallgoods royalty.

Well respected for pork products, particularly Christmas ham, Andrews Choice has launched a range of charcuterie with a curated selection of sausages and bacon.

For more than 25 years, Melbourne based master butcher and founder of Andrew's Choice, Andrew Vourvahakis has drawn on his Greek roots, weaving 'Meraki' into his everyday life and his range of artisan smallgoods.

Andrew's passion and dedication to doing what he loves each day have made 'Meraki' the core philosophy

of the Andrew's Choice brand. It's a passion that creates a quality and flavour that has positioned Andrew's as smallgoods royalty in Australia.

Ever since Andrew was crowned the National Sausage King at Melbourne's famous MoombaFestival, he has embarked on a mission to give artisan smoked sausages the reputation and exposure they deserve.

Beautifully presented, the range of five sausages and bacon, give the consumer a sense of high expectation of what is to come. Each product is made with Australian ingredients.

"We want to educate consumers on the rich history of smallgoods and the age-old art of smoking and curing and give them a guaranteed unforgettable experience at home with our products," says Andrew.

"We genuinely believe that you cannot create outstanding charcuterie if you don't start with the best quality ingredients. Our partnership with local farmers is integral, which is why we are as picky about our farmers as we are about our pigs.

"We select farmers who share our beliefs and understand that the best tasting meat comes from happy animals that are raised sustainably. When it comes to the pigs; we procure only the finest hand-selected female pigs to ensure a delicate aroma and sweetness in all our smallgoods."

Available through retail outlets, the range of smallgoods created by Andrew includes:

- Chilli & Cheese Kransky
- Legendary Cheese Kransky
- Viennese Franks
- Delicious Rindless Short Bacon
- Authentic Greek Loukaniko
- Mayura Station Wagyu Dolce ■



Andrew's Choice range of charcuterie.

Pinnacle of Wagyu Brand Beef Awards announced

The pinnacle of Branded Beef competitions for the best Wagyu brands in Australia – the Wagyu Branded Beef Competition – is presented by the Australian Wagyu Association. The award winners for the best brands in Australia were celebrated at the annual Wagyu Conference Gala Dinner in late April, in front of 400 of the industry's leading producers, experts and brands.

The Wagyu Branded Beef Competition saw an enormous 46 entries, from 31 world class brands judged by a panel of 32 food and beef industry experts. The WBBC represents the very best Australian Wagyu has to offer, with truly exceptional world-class entries.

Judged across three classes – Fullblood Wagyu, Crossbred Wagyu and Commercial Wagyu – with judges scoring visual appeal (raw and cooked), juiciness, flavour, aroma and the physical sensation in your mouth. The WBBC promotes excellence in the production of Wagyu beef and advancement of Wagyu – the world's luxury beef.

Taking out the ultimate title of Grand Champion was Signature Series by Mayura Station in the Fullblood class. On receiving the title, Scott de Bruin, CEO of Mayura Station said that: "We strive hard for excellence and to be the best beef brand in the world and it is such an honour to be awarded, I am so proud of what we have achieved."



Class 1 - Fullblood

Class Champion: Signature Series by Mayura Station

Gold Medallists:

- Signature Series by Mayura Station
- Jade Wagyu by Kilcoy Global Foods
- Stone Axe Wagyu by Stone Axe Pastoral Company
- Cobungra Station by Stone Axe Pastoral Company
- Macquarie Wagyu by Direct Meat Company
- Infinite Fullblood Wagyu by Rangers Valley

Class 2 - Crossbred

Class Champion: WX9 by Rangers Valley

Gold Medallists:

- WX9 by Rangers Valley
- Carrara 640 by Kilcoy Global Foods
- Jack's Creek Wagyu X by Jack's Creek
- Stockyard Black by Stockyard Beef
- L'GROW by Lotte International
- Connors Wagyu by Direct Meat Company
- Poll Wagyu

Class 3 – Commercial Marble Score 5-7

Class Champion: WX by Rangers Valley

Gold Medallists:

- WX by Rangers Valley
- Icon Xb Wagyu by Paradigm Foods

"I would like to thank the Australian Wagyu Brands for the continued growing support they are showing for the Wagyu Branded Beef Competition," said Ron Fitzgerald, AWA Branded Beef Competition Coordinator.

"I count it a rare privilege to be in a room where so many extremely high-quality steaks are displayed together, representing the best beef Australia has to offer. It is great to see the depth and quality of the Australian Wagyu Industry being demonstrated in the entries."

"The level of quality and range of brands continues to increase year on year, highlighting the high level of competition and the continual focus on excellence in producing Wagyu, the world's luxury beef," said Australian Wagyu Association, CEO, Matt McDonagh.

"We congratulate Mayura for achieving the 2021 Grand Champion brand for the second time, including being the Champion Fullblood entry for 2022. We congratulate Rangers Valley for their WX brands being the Champion entries for the Open Crossbred and Commercial Classes.

"With ever increasing numbers of entries, I would like to Mr Ron Fitzgerald, Dr Alex Ball, the Chief Steward, the organising committee and Judges for their time to make this happen. I would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Prime Cut Meats and Comcater Brisbane for hosting the event for preparation and judging to give such a stellar outcome." ■



Butcher Wars are back!

The knives were out, the competition fierce and plenty of spectators on hand to witness.

Not a gladiatorial combat, but the return of the Butcher Wars during Meatstock Melbourne and Toowoomba definitely proved that competition was well and truly alive and kicking.

Witnessed by hundreds of visitors to Meatstock, six butchers in each event vied for the title of the Butcher Wars, sponsored by AMIST.

In Melbourne, the title was taken out by Gary Thompson of The Squealing Pig butcher shop in Queensland, while the Young Butcher award went to Lochie Waters.

In Meatstock Toowoomba, Gary came second overall, while Lochie took out the Young Butcher award once more.



Butcher War Results, Melbourne, Toowoomba and Sydney

Place	Melbourne	Toowoomba	Sydney
1	Gary Thompson, The Squealing Pig	Paul Lavelle, Queensland Country Meats	Craig Munro, Munro's Quality Meats
2	Lochie Waters, Uni Plaza Meats	Gary Thompson, The Squealing Pig	Gareth Hunt, Hunt & Co. Quality Meats
3	Brett Laws, Pryde Meats	Lochie Waters, Uni Plaza Meats	Brett Laws, Pryde Meats
4	Joel Young, 3Js Butcher	Christian Nicholls, Highfields Gourmet Meats	Paul Suleyman, Goodwood Quality Meats
5	Mitchell Hawes, Frohlies Meats	Mitchell Hawes, Frohlies Meats	Liam Crawley, Crawley's Quality Cuts
6	Michael Hay, Smokers Butchery	Gareth Hunt, Hunt & Co Quality Meats	Gary Thompson, The Squealing Pig
7	Paul Klooster, Ashburton Meats	Lisa Land, Inglewood Highway Meats	Ben Mahoney, Clifton Beach Butchery
8	Shannon Walker, All Things Meat	Alex Wordsworth, Master Butchers Whitsunday	Mitch Hawes, Frohlies Meats and Young Butcher
9	Matt Tyquin, Ashburton Meats	Shannon Walker, All Things Meat	Dave Collins, Bribie Road Butchery
10	Gareth Gorridge, The Meat Boutique	Dave Collins, Bribie Road Butchery	Rob Connor, Finer Things Deli & Butchery

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

Lochie, at the age of 22 owns and operates Uni Plaza Meats in Toowoomba, started like most butchers as a clean up kid, completing his apprenticeship at Uni Plaza. At 21 he was offered the opportunity to buy the business – a dream come true, but much earlier than he had anticipated.

“Coming second in Melbourne and getting the Young Butcher award is unreal, absolutely on cloud nine” he said. “For years I have seen butchers on Instagram and Facebook holding one of these trophies with a meat cleaver hanging out the top of it and I can tell you it feels bloody good to have one of my own!”



NH Foods team member for Boning Wars, Toowoomba.

Butcher War first – Boning Wars

A first for the Butcher Wars format, the Boning Wars was held at Meatstock Toowoomba, recognising the special art of the break down butcher, portioning the carcase to access each cut.

It takes strength, precision and skill. The Boning Wars consisted of teams of two – a boner and a portioner. Each team processed a hindquarter in the weight range of 50-80kgs where the Boner processed the primals, the portioner did the trim:

- Flank steak > Thin Flank meat > Tenderloin ss/off > Porterhouse >
- Tri-Tip > Rump Cap > Rossbiff > Topside > Knuckle >
- Bone-in Shank > Outside flat and eye round >
- Fat 65/85 chemical lean trim

Judging was provided by industry experts on speed, knifework, yield and primal presentation.

Results:

1st Casino Food Co-op Team 1

2nd NH Foods

3rd Casino Food Co-op Team 2

Well done to all the butchers who competed in the Sydney AMIST Super Butcher Wars 2022. The standard of competition was incredibly high and all displays were nothing short of spectacular. Honoured and proud to have naming rights for this epic event. ■

Fire to Fork gives cooking an adventure

Camping is a fundamental part of the Australian lifestyle for many, but preparing a meal that isn't out of a can, or made at home and frozen can be a daunting undertaking.

Harry Fisher, author of *Fire to Fork* spent ever increasing amounts of time camping – tent and open fire style camping with mates, no hairdryers in sight – and invariably was in charge of food.

On one trip, a friend commented that in two weeks, not one meal was repeated, testament to Fisher's creativity and use of what is on hand and pre-planning.

His evolution by trial and error to establish what basic tools you need, pantry staples and recipes that work to feed a couple or a horde has resulted in this book. This handy book takes barbecue to the next level – no kettle drums here! A flat hot plate, grill, frypan and a camp oven are pretty much all he uses. Guidance on camp kitchen refrigeration is also given to maximise shelf life of fresher ingredients.

Fisher has five golden rules:

- Only use ingredients bought from a butcher or from the supermarket – no activated avocado or hipster vegan products
- All ingredients should travel well – good luck with iceberg lettuce
- Where possible use long life alternatives for longer trips
- Conserve water – less pots means less cleaning up water
- Cook on the fire. Except for the cocktails

It is the freshness of his ingredients for the recipes that provides half the wow factor – the rest is by the fire and smoke.



He readily admits that damper is usually awful, but with a bit of creativity, even damper can be improved upon.

Quick meals for breakfast and lunch include classics like steak sandwiches and bacon and eggs, but mains get ramped up with recipes such as roasted lamb racks, chicken parma and mud crab linguine. Sides, as a rule, do not include salads, but chargrilled veggies, after all you don't make friends with salad.

With each meat dish, Fisher gives guidance on how to prepare the protein, how to raise or temper the heat of the fire and which pot or pan to use.

To round out the book, desserts and cocktails (like burnt grapefruit & gin) finish a banquet in the Australian bush or beach.

The photography is earthy, with plenty of shots of Australian bush and beach settings, plenty of fire and flame that gives its own style of romance.

Published by Exploring Eden Media, *Fire to Fork*, by Harry Fisher retails from Dymocks at \$39.95

See page 35 for details on how to win a copy. ■

Winners March 2022 Find a Word



Congratulations to the winners and thank you to our sponsor BUNZL. Bunzl will contact all winners and make arrangements to deliver your prize.

Khabin 10inch Cimetar Steak Knife and 12inch Steel
Essie Botha, Marriott Meats, Marleston SA

Khabin 6inch Graton-edged Boning Knife

Afdhol Luddin, Ikhwan Butcher, Bentley, WA

Sherry James, Carina North Quality Meats, Carina Qld

Trudy Burk, Morses Butchery, Latrobe Tas

Joanna Bedford, LZH Butchers, Parap NT

Phillip Revel & Tiah Cavigan, Sommerville Village Meats, Sommerville Vic

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Left to right:

Joel Young 3Js Butchers;

Mitchell Hawes Frohlies Meats;

Brett Lawes Pryde Meats;

Lochie Waters Uniplaza Meats;

Gary Thompson The Squealing Pig (winner)



Meet Gary Thompson, winner AMIST Super Butcher Wars Melbourne 2022

What is your name and the name of your butcher's shop and where is it located?

Gary Thompson. My butcher shop is called 'The Squealing Pig' in Burpengary Plaza in Queensland.

How long have you been a butcher?

40 years

Why did you become a butcher?

I always wanted to see what was behind the door and where the butcher disappeared to. I wondered what the sawdust was for. It just seemed really cool.

Where did you do your training?

Bush's and Peters Meats in Sydney

What are the typical products you have in your store?

Traditional cuts and value added products but with more focus on cooked, ready to eat products.

People are time poor these days and want value for money and healthy comfort food.

Who is your typical customer?

My customer base is wide ranging. I get a lot of pensioners, lots of tradies, and a good mix of blue and white collar workers coming into my shop.

What are your favourite products?

Wagyu and cooked products.

What has been the highlight of butchering so far?

Making it into the Australian team which went to the World Butchers Challenge in Sacramento, USA.

What are some of the challenges you have faced?

Massive meat price rises in the last two years and vegans actively protesting at my store (well not really they are good for business haha)

What goals do you have for the future?

I'd like to win at the World Butchers Challenge, win Sydney's Meatstock, mentor younger butchers to compete at Meatstock and hopefully progress to the Australian team.

What is your retirement dream?

Travel the world and compete in a few overseas butcher wars, and play a lot of golf!

How is superannuation important to you?

Super is very important to me as something has to pay for these dreams of mine!!



How do you feel about winning the AMIST Super Butcher Wars at Meatstock?

It was a euphoric feeling knowing that I beat some of the best butchers in the country!

What does winning mean to you?

It is very satisfying to know that at my age I can still compete at the highest level.

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Instore marketing presence high on agenda for butchers

Instore marketing presence and support for butchers is high on agenda for the Australian Pork Butchers program, with the aim to establish an all-year-round APL presence to stay front of mind with shoppers within the retailers, and motivate the shift to pork.

The newest Butchers POS kit will be launching this May. This POS Kit will align with the national TV commercial centred around pulled pork with a focus on establishing a call out instore that pork is an everyday dinner winner for shoppers.

APL are aiming to target a new segment of consumers who are time poor and want easy meals that are guaranteed to be accepted by their children.



Our market research has identified that this new target presents a significant opportunity to grow pork consumption. Keeping the cheekiness of the brand, the POS kit will be communicating the ways pulled pork can be a mid-week dinner winner with simple, fun, and inspiring recipes.

Please pre order the free kits now through the pork butchers' website <https://australianporkbutchers.com/pages/pork-butcher-marketing-materials>

If you are a wholesaler to butchers and would like to bulk order POS kits to give to your customers, please email porkbutchers@australianpork.com.au ■

By Stephanie Flynn

It was not until 1971 that saltwater crocodiles were protected in the Northern Territory following decades of unregulated hunting in the wild for the global demand in skins for the fashion industry after World War II. By this time, their numbers were estimated to have dwindled to around 5,000 and it was not known whether conservation measures would recover the wild populations.

In a working relationship spanning 40 years, global leaders in crocodile research, management and conservation, zoologists, Professor Grahame Webb and Mr Charlie Manolis, have been involved with and guided the development of the Australian crocodile industry for production of skins, meat and other by-products.

In the mid-1980s they drafted the guidelines for the processing of Australian crocodiles for production of meat for human consumption.

The work of Professor Webb and Mr Manolis has resulted in conservation practices and farm management guidelines that have seen numbers of wild saltwater crocodiles in the Northern Territory expand to pristine levels, an estimated 100,000 individuals.

Alongside this, their work has also seen the development of associated industries for skins and meat that make a major economic contribution to the Territory.

Today, Australia is a global leader in crocodile conservation, management and farming practices with our provenance record informing demand for skins, meat and components for pharmaceutical use.

The emergence of an industry

It has taken 40 years for Professor Grahame Webb, owner 'Crocodylus Park', the leading saltwater crocodile research, education and tourist facility in Darwin, to establish the conservation and farming industries of the animal in the Northern Territory.

Although, today, Australian salt water crocodiles are highly prized by global fashion manufacturers like Hermes and Louis Vuitton for their skins and its meat for its culinary versatility, these industries would not exist in Australia today were it not for the conservation, management and farming practices established by the research conducted by Professor Webb and his associates.

It is a mark of the esteem in which his research and management expertise is held at a global level that Professor Webb has been Chairperson of the Crocodile Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature since 2004, a collective of global experts on crocodiles which has more than 700 members representing 70 countries.

After arriving in the Northern Territory in 1973 for his post-PhD work in zoology, it was not long before Professor Webb realised that the distance from the major educational centres and Government institutions in the south made it difficult to access funding.

In 1978 he set up a consultancy in Darwin to continue research into both saltwater and freshwater crocodiles for the NT Government and in 1994 established 'Crocodylus Park' as research and education facility, with tourism providing funding for ongoing research.

"The park was designed as a research and education facility, it is basically a group of zoologists in the tourism business as opposed to commercial investors in wildlife tourism," Professor Webb said.



Professor Grahame Webb is recognised as a global leader in crocodile research and management



Handbags, made from Australian saltwater crocodile skins, can sell upwards of US\$50,000

“Our objective has always been research on the animals, their management and ensuring the industry can thrive by providing commercial incentives for the public to tolerate crocodiles, even if they do not like them.

“This favours the conservation of both crocodiles and the wetland habitats they survive in, and it has been a remarkably successful approach.

“As far as we can determine, at the time crocodiles became protected in 1971, the biomass (the total combined weight of the animals in the population) had been reduced by 99 percent relative to 1945.

“The big issue in the 1970s was how many animals were left and whether they retained the biological ability to recover, there was virtually nothing known about their population processes and so the opportunities for research were vast,” he said.

In the early 1970s work commenced on both a ranching programme, where eggs were collected in the wild, and the establishment of facilities and systems to farm the animals which was no less challenging and just as pioneering, as there was not the long history in existence that is associated with farming cattle or sheep.

These early research phases yielded massive results with the discovery that the wild crocodile population progressively recovered in association with conservation programmes along with the knowledge of the animals’ growth and habits which was to form the basis of establishing the production industry.

It was found that crocodiles’ recovery initially occurred in cohorts, that is firstly the hatchlings recovered, then the three-year-olds, so that while numbers of the animals saw an immediate response, the total biomass in the wild took a great deal longer.

It takes 15 or 16 years for crocodiles to mature with males doing so at around three metres in length and females around 2.3 metres.

But, in time, researchers noted that numbers of young crocodiles declined.

These research observations led to the knowledge that crocodiles control their own population with cannibalistic practices, the older animals consume the smaller ones, and that reducing the numbers of hatchlings through egg harvest had no impact on the recovery rate of the population.

The farming systems developed countered the impact of cannibalism by ensuring only like-sized animals were penned together.

By 1987, the farming process and systems were sufficiently established to meet international requirements for export and skins from Australia once again started entering world trade.

According to Professor Webb, while there are some 28 species and subspecies of crocodiles around the world, only about half have commercial value in their skins.

Among those that are commercially valuable are ‘classic’ skins, which include the saltwater crocodiles found in Australia, the most highly prized by the fashion industry due to their small-scale patterns with no bone deposits within the scale.

The primary use of saltwater crocodile skins is for luxury handbags with leading manufacturers like Hermes and Louis Vuitton paying high prices for perfect skins which are then tanned and processed at their own facilities, mainly in Singapore, France and Italy. The handbags, individually dyed and hand-crafted, can sell for upwards of US\$50,000.

These global companies have recently invested in Australian farms and started new farms with Hermes reportedly paying over \$7m dollars for land in the Northern Territory to establish its own downstream farming production facility.

While the skin is the main product of crocodile farming, the meat has also become an important source of income for the industry.

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“In addition to developing the farming systems, we also had to develop new abattoir techniques and protocols to enable the industry to maximise its production of meat for human consumption, with the meat industry being essentially the by-product of skin production,” Professor Webb said.

“Crocodiles are more akin to fish in that they are cold-blooded animals and are reasonably free of pathogens that can transfer to humans but still the procedures that have been put in place are very stringent.

“In over 30 years, there has not been one problem we are aware of with illness from the consumption of crocodile meat, it is a very healthy meat, with fat stored in discrete fat bodies and not spread throughout the muscle fibres,” he said.

The outcomes of the pioneering research and conservation programmes in which Professor Webb and his colleagues played such a pivotal role have been immense including the prevention of extinction of a wild crocodile population and the establishment of a farming and export industry that was valued by Ernst Young in 2016 at over \$100 million in direct annual income for the Territory.

The ranching programme generates an income for Indigenous population whereby people collect eggs in the wild swampy areas on their lands. Earnings can be around \$1,000 to \$1,500 per nest which often contain around fifty eggs generating, in some cases, an annual income of \$30,000 for landowners.

These eggs provide the source of animals for the farming and production sector of the industry which also provides employment for Indigenous people particularly on the new farms now being established on remote traditional lands, which function as a juvenile animal nursery for the industry.

It is Australia’s top of the range conservation credentials, established by Professor Webb and colleagues, that make the nation the preferred provider of skins for the high-end fashion market globally. A key legacy of these efforts is the clear demonstration that conservation and industry development can proceed together through partnerships that are mutually inclusive rather than exclusive. ■



Darwin’s ‘Crocodylus Park’ was primarily established as a crocodile research and education facility with tourism providing funding for ongoing research

Australia’s Croc Meat – a growing domestic market

In an age where consumers are facing soaring prices for red meat and exhibiting a growing preparedness to ‘have a go’ at something exotic and different, retail butchers have an opportunity to expand their product range to include Australia’s own saltwater crocodile meat.

In the mid-1980s, Professor Grahame Webb and Charlie Manolis, working together with local Northern Territory authorities, drafted guidelines for the processing of crocodile meat for human consumption.

These guidelines formed the basis of the current Australian FSANZ standard (Australian Standard AS4467 for the Hygienic Production of Crocodile Meat for Human Consumption), with crocodile meat now being produced for national and international markets.

Australian crocodile meat is highly sought after in the food service sector nationally.

New pharmaceutical research into crocodile components underpins the medicinal benefits long valued in traditional Chinese herbal medicines.

According to Mr Manolis, crocodile meat is high in protein, is low in fat and cholesterol content, takes up flavour exceptionally well, offers a variety of cuts and can be used in myriad of ways, including minced for sausages and burgers.

“There are no separate regulations for butchers to carry crocodile meat, the key is that it is to be treated like chicken at the retail point” Mr Manolis said.



Mr Charlie Manolis has been a lead player in the establishment of Australia's crocodile meat industry

"While butchers can sell the meat, each state has its own set of regulations and guidelines for its importation, so it worth checking local health regulations for any additional requirements.

"There are many factors which govern the market price of the meat both domestically and internationally, with the primary driver being the demand for the size of the skin the fashion industry which, at the moment, is for smaller skins so this limits the amount of meat that is potentially available to the market," he said.

The prime cut of the crocodile is the tail meat portion, which is the most expensive, with the body meat, most suitable for soup and stir-fry as well as mincing, is less expensive.

Unlike conventional livestock, crocodiles are grown for their skins, which are of high value, and meat is a by-product, albeit a valuable one. Processing facilities for crocodile meat is similar to fish and initially only whole carcasses for the domestic market were produced to simplify tracking of

Crocs for medicine

According to Mr Manolis, the future area of industry development and export opportunities is in the production of pharmaceutical products.

The bile of the animal is now being used as an anticancer treatment and for asthma and some blood components, sold as tablets, are also manufactured and used in the treatment of cancers and for general wellbeing. Traditional Chinese medicine has long recognised the value of crocodile meat in the treatment of lung and chest complaints and there is high demand for Australian exports for this purpose.

The fat is recognised as highly valued for the healing of wounds and there are already manufacturers in Australia, working on the back of scientific data which bears out its value, selling creams for this purpose.

product, and to assess the new market over time. Different cuts are now available and some are export accredited.

"Today, Australia is considered a global leader in its exacting standards of food safety regulations in crocodile meat, as well as its provenance in terms of animal conservation and welfare practices so these factors maintain a demand for our product on premium global markets," Mr Manolis said.

"Increasing competition from lower cost producers globally, most notably the USA and Africa, as well as China's foray in to its own crocodile industry and importation of live crocodiles from neighbouring countries, are proving to be major barriers to expanding global market share in crocodile meat.

"As Australia prohibits the export of live wildlife for commercial purposes, Australian producers are unable to enter the live export trade on global markets," he said.

The Australian domestic market became the focus of the industry's efforts to market crocodile meat, and it recognised the importance of implementing an education programme on cooking the various cuts of the meat.

The cornerstone of the campaign was the design of dishes featuring the crocodile meat and the education of young future chefs in cooking schools around the country.

"Most people think that because it is wild it needs to be cooked really well but, in fact, it becomes tough if you do so," Mr Manolis said.

"You can cook it on the barbeque quickly with lemon and pepper, you can mince it for sausages and burgers or slice it thinly for stir-fry or soups, so it is very versatile.

"Demand from the considerable numbers of tourists that visit the Top End is high, we do not have to sell it conceptually, so many restaurants now in the Northern Territory feature crocodile dishes on their menus and here, at the research facility, you can buy the meat and recipe," he said. ■



A by-product of production for skins, Australian crocodile meat is in high demand with the tail being the prime cut

Cooking with Croc

From the heart of the United Kingdom via the tourist mecca of southern Spain to Darwin, the exotic north Australian capital, Chef Martin Bouchier has harboured a passion for cooking with crocodile meat for over 30 years.

A visit to Darwin is not complete without a culinary adventure at Martin's Phat Mango Restaurant at which crocodile and Barramundi, both synonymous with the 'Top End', feature on his all-Australian menu.

Trained in the culinary arts in Cheshire and north Wales, where he was a pioneer and award winner in the notion of 'provenance', Martin was cooking with crocodile meat imported from Australia 30 years ago.

In establishing his restaurant, Phat Mango (an anacronym for Pretty Hot and Tempting) in 2020, Martin has continued his personal philosophy of ensuring traceability for all the produce on his menus. First preference goes to Northern Territory sourced ingredients for his dishes.

"I love showcasing what is truly Territorian, it is my passion, there is so much good produce up here whether it be the meat, the fish or the native ingredients which are uniquely Australian," Martin said.

"It is through this passion that the use of crocodile has made its way into our menus, it is a very healthy meat like other Australian native proteins including emu or kangaroo.

"It has taken a long time and a lot of work to establish the lines of supply directly with producers across the NT and more broadly throughout Australia for all the ingredients we use but it is well worth the effort because to me provenance of the produce is everything," he said.

Martin has now established direct relationships with seven Indigenous communities in Australia from which he sources native ingredients like wattle, myrtle and various berries which are used to flavour most of the recipes created at Phat Mango.

He has also established direct supply relationships with four local beef producers as well as a direct supply relationship with a crocodile farm for the supply of a range of cuts.

For over a decade, Martin and his team have experimented with croc meat cuts from the high-end tail and leg cuts for bbq, chargrilled or baked dishes as well as the tender tongue and he is rapt with the public acceptance of their endeavours.

"Synonymous with the NT is a Territorian-style Laksa so we have featured the tail meat using the subtleties of sweet, sour and salty to marinate the meat, then it is chargrilled quickly and sliced over the top of locally-made noodles and a broth made using locally grown chillies and indigenous spices," Martin said.

"Our most recent experiments have been with the tongue, which is easily as tender as a beef eye fillet, and customers



Chef Martin Bouchier has been experimenting with a range of recipes featuring various cuts of crocodile meat in his Darwin restaurant, Phat Mango

have loved it with dishes going 'viral' on the internet, which shows how people are a lot more adventurous now in their preparedness to taste new products and flavour combinations," Martin said.

Phat Mango has experimented with eight or more variations featuring crocodile tongue including flash frying the meat, using it as a schnitzel dish, and are currently trialling a croc terrine as well as marinating and searing it into a cured meat.

According to Martin the best is marinating it in a miso flavouring then hitting it with the chargrill at 500 degrees, cooking it very quickly, then slicing it. ■

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HexCell

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Croc Skewers on the BBQ

by Martin the Chef

Serves 4. 20 minutes

- 500g crocodile meat preferably tail
- Lemon juice from one medium lemon
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper
- ½ tsp dried lemon myrtle
- 1 each capsicum: red, yellow, green diced same size as croc

Quick Instructions

1. Cut the meat (500g) into bite-size pieces. Season it with salt flakes (1 tsp), black pepper (1/4 tsp), myrtle dust (1/2 tsp), garlic (2 cloves, minced) and freshly squeezed lemon juice (1 medium lemon).
2. Thread onto skewers interspersed with red, green & yellow capsicum.
3. Refrigerate this for about 2 hours.
4. After 2 hours, take your meat out of the fridge, heat oil in pan, shallow and slow fry your meat, turning it as you go until it turns a golden-brown colour.
5. or place on the grill!
6. And you're done. You can drizzle a sauce of choice onto the meat or just eat it dry with your starch and vegetables of choice.

Just be sure to serve this hot/ warm, it tastes way better than if it's allowed to get cold. ■

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Good structure for longevity in business

The high country of Victoria and New South Wales is a world of history, from The Snowy Hydro scheme to *The Man from Snowy River* and in the 1950s, the expansion of Lake Hume.

Tallangatta, on the Mitta Arm of Lake Hume has a rich history of its own. Known as the 'town that moved', old Tallangatta is now mostly underwater when the Lake Hume expansion flooded the town in 1956.

As part of the planned flooding, the authorities of the time rebuilt businesses in 'new' Tallangatta, 8km away, and relocated many of the homes. Some buildings still remain in old Tallangatta, but for the most part, Tallangatta sits on the western side of Lake Hume.

Of the businesses that were rebuilt, one was the butcher shop, now owned by Greg Cavanagh. Originally, the business was the retail outlet for Tallangatta Meat Processors owned by the Smith family. The Smiths, themselves have a long history in the region providing processing services for lamb (and beef until recently) for the district.

"Originally there were two butcher shops, in the area when Tallangatta provided the meat supply into the Snowy Hydro scheme," says Greg Cavanagh, owner of Tallangatta Butchery.

"When the town moved, the butcher shop that was rebuilt, was pretty big for those days, and reasonably modern."

"While the Snowy scheme is long finished, the wholesale business for the region is still pretty strong and is the majority of our business now."

Greg's father, Jock, supplied lambs to the shop more than 30 years ago, and had a strong relationship with the owner. His



Greg and Kim, owners of Tallangatta Butchery.

father bought the business, allowing Greg to undertake a butcher apprenticeship, under the supervision of the manager. Some 15 years later, Greg bought the business from his parents.

A small enterprise at the time, Greg and Jock, also ran the local school bus, butchering in the morning, before heading out to drive the bus.

The business now employs three butchers, three apprentices, two drivers, two value-add staff and the clean-up and 'crumbing' kids. Throughput of the shop is around 50 lambs per week, processed at Tallangatta Meat Processors, 15-20 beef bodies and about 8-10 pigs per week processed in Wangaratta.

The shop has two main areas – the front room is for cutting and the wrapping station. The front coolroom holds the packaged meats for delivery. What was the staffroom, has been converted into another boning room with a rail installed to hold the carcasses. A large coolroom, installed 12 months ago at the rear, is where the hanging carcasses are held. Completing the site, is the retail section at the front of the building.

"We have three butchers that do the majority of the store order cutting before the shop opens. One butcher holds the fort in the shop through the day, cutting to order and serving the locals and the tourists. The rest of the day is spent prepping for the next day. My partner Kim, basically runs the show, doing the everyday operations, up to 70 hours a week sometimes. I don't know how she does it!"

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The Tallangatta Butchery does a 220km daily round trip to deliver to regional supermarkets and hospitality.

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“The two value-add people sort the orders for the supermarkets, do the wrapping station and prep the value-add products. The apprentices take care of most of the breaking, the mincing, sausages and learn the basics. The ‘crumbing kids’ come in around 5am and do all the schnitzels and other crumbed products, before they go to school. We rotate through a few kids for that so that it isn’t too much for them with school.”

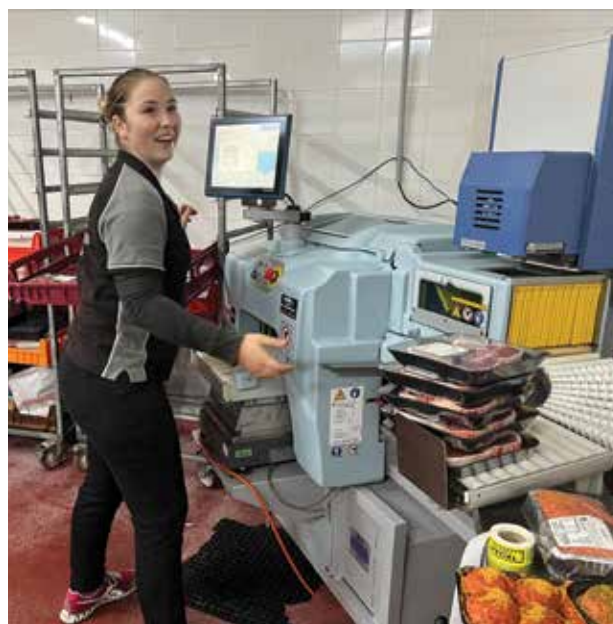
A 220km round trip sees the drivers for the butchery travel to Mt Beauty, Myrtleford, Corryong, Yackandandah and Falls Creek to regularly supply the local supermarkets and hospitality. The shop provides staple cuts in beef, lamb, pork and chicken as well as value-add products such as crumbed lines, marinated mixes and stir fry’s and sausages. Products are pre-packed ready for retail display in the supermarkets.

Jock does a weekly trip on Monday to take the cattle from their farm to Wangaratta before heading to the Corowa lamb market. Tuesday is the cattle sale at Barnawartha where he will buy 15-20 head for finishing on the farm.

“The supermarkets and hospitality make up about 90% of our business – we do a couple of bulk runs for customers in Albury Wodonga when we are up that way. If customers are on our run, we are happy to drop it off, but it is not a business avenue we pursue.

“The panic buying during covid saw the business double for a few weeks – our butchers were working 16 hours a day to keep up, and Dad was forever going down to Wangaratta to get more beef and pork carcasses.”

While business has slowed a little, the demand by local supermarkets or towns without a butcher continues to grow. Thankful for a butcher shop that was built with volume in mind, Greg says his biggest challenge is staff.



Megan processes all the orders and preps them for delivery.



“Getting the clean-up and crumbing kids is not such a problem, but retaining the apprentices, or attracting fully qualified butchers is a challenge. During covid, I was sourcing extra butchers from Albury Wodonga, but the extra hour a day to get here does take its toll.

“It’s great when the local kids enjoy the work enough to do an apprenticeship and hopefully stay on. We have been blessed with some of the kids that have come through.”

“When you have been doing this job for 30-something years, you must be doing something right and have a reasonable reputation. You sell good meat; it will sell itself in the end. And that is what we try and do, sell good meat from our own farm. That has taken a lot of years to get right. It is not just a matter of getting a beast, feeding it and processing, you need effort and infrastructure to get it right and I reckon we have.” ■



Ory, Nathan, Tom, Rex butchers: Apprentices Ory, Nathan and Tom do the break downs, mincing and sausages while Rex helps with processing orders, and holds the retail fort during the day.

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Hallston Valley Farm is nestled in the hills above Gippsland, undulating, always lush, plenty of rain and pasture. A perfect setting for animals that are resilient for a cooler climate.

Owners Jill and Gary Noble, have established a farm specialising in paddock to plate for Wiltshire Horn sheep, which Jill says are perfect for the climate and produce top quality lamb.

In addition to the lamb, Hallston Valley Farm has a small holding of Angus cattle as well as an 80-tree orchard.

Using an online pre-order system Jill collates 6-8 orders, plus an additional amount for sale on the farm. The animals are then slaughtered at Radfords in Warragul. The carcasses are processed at Country Style Meats in nearby Garfield, where they are prepared and frozen into 20kg packs for delivery to the customer. The Angus are agisted on neighbouring farms – about four are processed per year depending on the number of orders for beef.

The relationship that Jill has established with Radfords and Country Style Meats has been beneficial, in that both have been happy to support the farm in the small number of animals processed. In addition, both have given Jill the education she needed on carcass quality and cuts in order to improve her flock for meat.

“We are very fortunate to have an abattoir like Radford’s so close by, they have been nothing but accommodating. The guys at Country Style Meats give me the opportunity to



Jill and Gary Noble of Hallston Valley Farm.

inspect every single carcass and give me feedback on fat coverage, marbling, cut quality – anything I need to know.”

Many of the customers to Hallston Valley Farm are looking for a fuller flavour that comes with older animals. The sheep are grown out to around 40-45kg. Working with a partner butcher means that any special requests can be met, such as offal, loin roasts or smoked legs, a specialty of Country Style Meats.

Partner butcher shops around Melbourne allow Jill to deliver to customers in a safe manner, ready for pickup.

“Using a partner butcher shop arrangement has been beneficial in that it is a win for everyone. We can organise to have it delivered to a butcher shop, and pay a cut and pack fee. The customer picks it up from the butcher and often will buy other meats while they are, it works well.”

Jill has found that the Wiltshire Horn breed dresses well, with less than 40% wastage. The sheep are fully grazed – breeders may be given grain supplements during pregnancy and lactation to help with their condition.



Carcass assessment of Wiltshire born lamb at partner butcher, Garfield's Country Style Meats.

The community focus for Jill and Gary is the opportunity for visitors to gain a farm experience – pick your own fruit, animal husbandry and farm management. The couple often work with agencies such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to give families a taste of farming.

Both Jill and Gary have a background in farming. Jill is originally from Ireland where her family raised sheep, while Gary is a qualified horticulturist. Both are committed to creating a farm that meets their own needs as well as the needs of the animals.

“Our ethos is one of the most important things about our farm. We have a focus on sustainable farming practices using regenerative practices. Our local community is a big part of how we do that. We often barter meat for fencing or other farm help. The open farm days fit with our focus on education and sharing, so people can come and visit and see it, get involved, experience it and know where their food comes from. With animal welfare we use anaesthetic for castrations to minimal farming treatments such as drenches, and only checking worming when we need to.”

To promote the farm, Jill and Gary do all their own marketing and branding, and regularly attend regional field days and events such as Farmworld and Meatstock to bring awareness to their meat and farm. Jill also produces podcasts about breeding sheep as well as involved in the breed association. ■



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Collagen for beauty

Eat your wrinkles away... it's an offer that could mean a major value-add for Australian meat processors.

The rise of the collagen-rich 'beauty snack' could see returns 100-fold higher for hides, according to an MLA-funded study.

Hides, as well as connective tissues, bones and skin portions, could unlock high-quality collagen believed to benefit skin health, reinforce tendons, prevent bone loss and offer arthritis relief.

A study by Chief Nutrition, funded by MLA's Donor Company, tallied-up potential financial gains from developing an Australian collagen market. It assumed an average 20kg hide weight has an average price of \$20, meaning the price of raw bovine hide is around \$1/kg. "If sold as part of a value-added bovine collagen product for over \$100/kg, this would result in a value multiplier of over 100x the raw material price," according to the report.



*Chief Nutrition's co-founder
Justin Babet.*

Chief Nutrition's co-founder Justin Babet said: "In many cases it is cheaper for graziers to bury hides in landfill than incur the cost of processing in order to sell them. We have had rapid growth in the Australian market, and

are growing into export markets, for our range of bovine collagen protein bars/cookies ... we currently source our bovine collagen from Argentina."

Other producers in the Australian market also have to rely on imported collagen, mostly from South America, although one promotes it uses a combined Australian and NZ product. Several boast of their product being 'grass-fed' or 'pasture-raised' and some offer organic, halal or kosher varieties.

Industry estimates last said predicted that the global collagen market will grow to US\$16.7 billion by 2028, with an average growth of 9.0%.

Mr Babet, along with the company CEO Brock Hatton compiled the report that estimated that A\$3 billion of additional annual revenue could be generated by the Australian beef industry "if all hides of beef cattle were processed into bovine collagen powder ... validating a global opportunity for what is essentially a waste product of the beef industry."

Hides (including small or poor-condition hides) can be processed for collagen. The two main types of bovine



Collagen products such as gelatin are used in foods and cosmetics.

Hides get a hiding

From prehistory to Prada, leather has been a clothing, footwear, fashion and upholstery staple.

However, price volatility and leather substitutes are taking some skin off the hide market. Car manufacturer Volvo has promised its electric fleet will not be equipped with leather upholstery. F1 driver, vegan Lewis Hamilton is asking his Mercedes team for leather-free interiors to his racing cars.

Artificial leathers are usually made of plastic polymers but the vegan market is keenly embracing plant-based substitutes made from recycled plastics, cork, pineapple leaf waste or apple peelings.

Film star Sam Corlett swapped his leather costume for one made using vegan-friendly cactus leather in the Nordic action movie Vikings: Valhalla's Star. Meanwhile, fitness-wear brand Sanabul is making boxing gloves from grape biomass.

Since the highs of 2014, the Australian hide market struggle through to FY2018/9 when prices fell 50-90%. Prices languished until September 2020, but then increased quickly to August 2021, before again sagging.

Average prices reported by MLA in March 2022 ex-works ranged depending on size from \$4-\$28.50 (NSW), \$10.75-\$22.25 (QLD) and \$5.50 to \$35.50 (Vic).

Larger hides are more valuable and in a depressed market smaller hides are often deemed worthless.

Hides out of the US are typically bigger and carry a higher value, as a result of the extensive feedlot production system. According to the MLA: "The country is capable of providing the world market with large supply of large hides."

MLA reports that the market has seen increased substitution for leather with synthetics in footwear and accessories – is mostly driven by cost and availability.

Increased environmental regulation in China (the world's biggest hide market and destination for more than 80% of Australia's supply, impacts throughput and increases overheads, while increasing labour costs in China are being passed onto processors/hide traders.

collagen supplements are gelatin and hydrolysed collagen. Gelatin is cooked collagen and is used as a gelling agent for a variety of foods. Hydrolysed collagen sees the product broken down into smaller proteins, which are easier for the human body to absorb. It can be added to liquids and foods as well as tablets and even face creams.

The MDC study recommended research into collagen processing/production methods. "For example, most bovine collagen is processed using harsh chemicals, therefore there may be opportunities to use other technologies such as freeze drying which may be a differentiator."

The study also suggested that hides sourced through regenerative farming practices could offer additional value-add opportunities.

Collagen from other species is available, although bovine sources currently account for around one-third of the market.

The human body's collagen production naturally declines with age. Smoking, excessive sugar/carbohydrate consumption and too

much sun exposure are also loss factors. Collagen loss leads to problems with bones, joints and skin.

Where are the buyers of a potential collagen industry?

The North American region is estimated to command the largest share of the overall collagen market. However, the Asia-Pacific region is expected to grow at the highest CAGR over the coming years. "Australian sourced bovine collagen protein ... in Asia Pacific (particularly in China) and the Middle East where consumers are attracted to 'clean and green' Australian-sourced products.

"While Australian sourced is less appealing to consumers in North America, we have determined there is high demand for 'regeneratively farmed' bovine collagen ... We anticipate that once Australian bovine collagen is available, growth into new markets and products will be rapid."

Australian hide industry experts indicated that the beauty snack market might spark interest in diversification. The capital invested in tannery technology has kept major buyers

focussed away from hide co-products, said one.

The MLA study neatly fits into some work being undertaken by AMPC into shredding hides for rendering in meat processing plants.

AMPC has been working with the Australian Meat Group, shredding hides to extract more value from them especially when hide prices are low.

AMPC Co-Innovation Manager Jemma Harper said the project installed machines capable of shredding the hides effectively. The study is now looking at the profitability of shredding.

"It is the first time such a process has been adopted by industry and the outcomes have been extremely successful so far providing a great alternative for industry when hide prices decrease due to market access issues," she said.

"By shredding and rendering the hide, the company has achieved a return on the carcass compared with the cost associated with sending it to landfill." ■

Is the global consumer-led boom over?

By Stephanie Flynn

After the consumer-led boom of the last two years, the oil price shock of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine and rising inflation globally, the big question is will we see a repeat of the great economic recession which followed the oil price shock and high inflationary period of the 1970s.

According to Angus Gidley-Baird, Senior Protein Analyst for global agribusiness giant, Rabobank, it is too early to call but, as the US Federal Reserve commences an aggressive interest rate rise agenda, it is US consumers who will decide whether a major recession reverberates around the global meat market later this year or in 2023.

In the meantime, all sectors of the Australian meat industry will face almost crippling cost pressures as rising inflation hits every aspect of business operations from the cost of fertilisers, feed and energy to transport and shipping.

Given the magnitude of rising costs expected over the remainder of this year and into 2023, it is unlikely that all increases will be absorbed by industry and consumers are likely to continue to feel the pinch at the retail point.

"The US Federal Reserve increased interest rates in March for the first time since 2018 to combat inflation, which is being experienced globally, and it has indicated several further rate rises by the end of this year," Mr Gidley-Baird said.

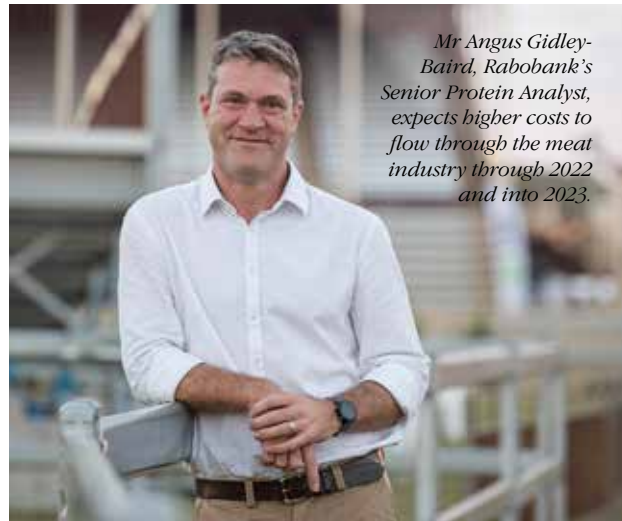
"It is now a question of whether consumers in the US lose confidence or do not earn enough income to cover their spending habits in the face of rising costs, so this is the crucial question from a meat and livestock perspective.

"If US consumer spending declines, there will be a big ripple effect in the global marketplace and I do believe that strong consumer demand over the past two years has driven the boom or 'demand-pull' we have been experiencing," he said.

In Australia too, the Reserve Bank has reversed its earlier intention to leave interest rates at historical lows until 2024 and signalled its intention to raise interest rates this year which will add further cost pressures to both business and consumer debt.

As higher costs push their way through the system it is likely that Australian consumer buying habits will change with consumption of pork and chicken expected to continue to rise and a shift is expected from the purchase of high-end beef to beef mince and cheaper cuts.

Domestic retail pressures are likely to increase as costs rise across the shopping basket for all proteins as well as for other goods.



Mr Angus Gidley-Baird, Rabobank's Senior Protein Analyst, expects higher costs to flow through the meat industry through 2022 and into 2023.

Although cattle prices are coming down, Mr Gidley-Baird suggests that while beef prices are unlikely to continue rising, butchers and consumers will not see corresponding price reductions.

Processing Sector

Australia's meat processing sector could see a lift in production this year of around 9% as the rebuilding efforts materialise into an increased availability of stock for slaughter.

The Australian meat industry has been under pressure from limited supply of cattle and sheep as the farming sector restocked after a record drought limiting supply for meat processors and driving domestic retail prices to record levels.

Mr Gidley-Baird, however, sees major constraints continuing for the sector including labour issues and a continuation of shipping container shortages well into 2023.

"We expect that around 6.4 million head of cattle could come through the system, but there is a question around the capacity of processors to increase production due to workforce limitations whether it be from COVID difficulties as new waves of the virus impact the population or a continued shortage of migrant workers," Mr Gidley-Baird said.

"We are seeing more migrant workers coming back into the system under the new Agricultural Visa and that will be useful but there is not an oversupply of workers out there so labour will continue to be a challenge," he said.

According to Mr Gidley-Baird container freight rates jumped dramatically last year with cost increases for dry goods surpassing those for refrigerated containers which lagged behind due to the longer-term contracts in place.

But, he believes that there is a likelihood that those rises will come into the system this year posing a further challenge for the sector for the remainder of this year.

“Shipping costs are likely to rise even more due to the difficulties with shipping routes and the competition for space,” Mr Gidley-Baird said.

“There will still be high costs and shipping congestion for the rest of the year, but we do believe that it will ease gradually.

“The market will work itself out, but it will take most of this year, 18 months even, in order to ease the congestion and return to some normalcy,” he said.

Export Markets

There has been a big change in the order of the major markets for exports of Australian beef since 2019 when China was the biggest market and, while the major four still dominate, Japan and Korea have returned to their more traditional positions as Australia’s largest markets.

According to Mr Gidley-Baird, Japan has now returned as Australia’s biggest export market, followed by the United States, Korea and China is now in fourth position.

“China and the US are valuable markets, but Japan and Korea are important because they are stable in terms of what they buy,” Mr Gidley-Baird said.

“China is much more price sensitive so they will search for cheaper-priced suppliers and it has opened up more suppliers most notably Brazil, the US and Uruguay.

“We cannot compete on price with the South American five so we must differentiate our product and not compete on price, so the big competitor for us in China is the United States,” he said.

Drought in the US has resulted in higher slaughter rates which means they are supplying more of their own product both into the domestic market and onto global markets.

This situation is reflected in a decline in Australia’s exports to the US in terms of volumes, a situation Mr Gidley-Baird expects to continue through to 2023.

But he says that the Australian beef industry needs to keep a close watch on what transpires in the US domestic market given that it is the high demand and pricing due to consumer demand which has driven the boom over the last two years.

“If US consumer demand is impacted by inflation and rising interest rates it will make a difference to global markets because they are also a competitor for us as well as a market,” Mr Gidley-Baird said.

“If they continue to have high prices at home, their exports will be highly priced in order to compete with the domestic market.

“I believe that high demand in the US has really driven a global price rise in beef in all markets, as a consequence, in Japan import prices are the highest they have been in five years and Chinese retail prices are also the highest they have been in five years,” he said.

The high price of beef in Japan is reflected in a decline in year-on-year imports, whereas, year-on-year imports for pork and chicken are stronger and increasing.

Mr Gidley-Baird does not believe Japan will stop buying expensive proteins like beef and lamb given consumer demand for a range of proteins in the diet will continue. ■



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CSIRO maps out proteins

Meat-shoppers of the future will pay a premium of between 3% and 7.5% for Australian meat that carries guaranteed nutrition, fair trade and sustainability labelling, according to a new CSIRO report.

Shoppers will also need proof of meat's origins, its impact on biodiversity and air quality and the treatment of meat-industry staff, CSIRO said.

The report supports hybrid proteins – incorporating animal and plant products – and also suggests that meat and non-meat industries could develop joint supply chains.

“Plant protein innovators could work with animal protein providers to develop hybrid products that add value,” the report said. “Further, animal, plant and non-traditional industries could work together to develop common systems for supply chain provenance and other important verified credentials so as not to each be starting from scratch.”

The CSIRO report said that meat-processing plants could see a shift away from bureaucratic audit systems to continuous QA monitoring, and there will be a focus on developing biodegradable food packing systems that extend shelf life, according to the report.

“Consumers are increasingly interested in convenience products, spurring demand for added-value ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook meals,” CSIRO reported.

The science agency predicts innovations to reduce or even eliminate the need for refrigeration as well as advances in food technology to reduce or remove the need for additives, nitrates and phosphates from processed meats.

The report noted that health has been a bigger concern for global consumers since the COVID-19 pandemic. “Increased health consciousness and interest in illness prevention impacts on purchasing decisions. For the red meat industry, understanding whether consumer perceptions about red meat are changing is critical to the industry's future growth.”

Partnering with numerous stakeholders, including MLA, CSIRO released the National Protein Roadmap in late March.

Future growth opportunities, according to the roadmap, include:

- new plant-based products;
- turning lesser cuts of red meat into value-added protein powders and nutraceuticals;
- developing higher-protein and better tasting legume crops;
- creating a new sustainable industry in Australian white-flesh fish; and
- exploring non-traditional forms of protein like cultivated meat and edible insects.

The document also focuses on alternative proteins. Plant-based products are winning an increasing share of the consumer protein spend but other offerings are not so well-accepted by the marketplace, the report notes.

It said: “While cultivated meat is very early in its development, there are many challenges that will impact ‘willingness to buy’ ... Consumer acceptance of cultivated meat is not guaranteed.”

A 2021 study found 56% of respondents were open to the idea of insect-derived protein for human consumption. However, “hesitancy about eating insects and consumer acceptance remains a challenge for the industry's growth,” according to the roadmap.

Protein from air, from plastic and are some of the more futuristic offerings also captured in the report. These include:

AIR: Protein made from captured atmospheric carbon and microbial fermentation using single-cell bacteria. A UK firm is developing a process capturing CO₂ from industrial emissions to create into protein that is used in fish and poultry feed. A US firm is seeking to create products across a variety of categories, including poultry, beef, pork, and seafood. A Finnish company .Solar Foods estimates that commercial production will begin in the first half of 2023.

PLASTICS: Early-stage research by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Michigan Technological University is harnessing bacteria that naturally break down plastics into protein.

FUNGAL: Harnessing naturally existing proteins produced by fungi and mycelium for alternative meat and feed products. Local firm Fable Foods is expanding Australian and overseas production of alternative meat products using protein ingredients found in shiitake mushrooms. The UK's Quorn company is commercially producing mycoprotein products for 19 countries, through fermentation of a fungus found in soil while in the US, Natures Fynd is scaling production of fungi protein ingredient in a new commercial facility in Chicago.

ALGAE: Growing a variety of algae species, able to produce protein ingredients using carbon dioxide, light, and sea or bore water. Several Australian companies are active in this space. Venus Shell Systems is developing a pilot seaweed farm that uses light, carbon dioxide, water, and residue to produce molecules used in a range of products including foods (muesli, pasta), digestive health and skin care products. Provectus Algae is expecting to use an industrial scale algae platform for commercially viable bulk protein production (by 2031 and Algae Pharm is growing commercial quantities of algae in ponds of bore water and salt; planning use in alternative protein products for livestock, pet, and human consumption. ■

For large scale food preparation choose versatile and efficient Reich ovens

Amongst the variety of processing methods available to food producers, Reich ovens offer thermal processing with exceptionally high air circulation. When you combine this rapid air circulation with temperature options to offer intensive cooling, you create an ideal environment for salami curing or salmon smoking.

Each Reich oven has exceptionally high air circulation leading to faster process times, lower weight losses and better product cook uniformity.

The BKQ reaches a treatment temperature of up to 300°C and can also low-pressure steam for maximum output and short process times. The BKQ has been developed for cooking products laying horizontally on up to 35 levels of screens and produces uniform treatment temperatures to cook, dry, roast, steam and intensive cool and provides an even crust and browning.

Convenience food production with BQK ovens allow side by side or in trolley formation with interlocking doors. Ovens in trolley formation allow entry of raw food on one side and exit as cooked food on the other side for the ultimate in food hygiene protection.

Reich's UKQ offers: reddening, drying, hot-smoking, cooking, hot-air cooking, cold-smoking, climatic smoking, maturing, fermenting, steaming and intensive cooling. Precise product laying on baking sheets or screens, makes for increased hygiene, reduced production costs and increased yields.



The UK oven is a space saving design that can expand by installing units behind or next to each other. It uses a vertical airflow system for hanging products like salamis, smallgoods, hams, or for smoking and drying meats. It is available in sizes from 1 to 12 trolley units and various smoke generators.

The Vertical airflow system has a versatile smoke range; hot-smoke, cold-smoke and climatic-smoke. It can also dry, cook, mature, ferment, steam, and intense cool. Airmaster UK have integrated entry systems for heavily loaded trolleys to be easily moved into place. They are designed to operate with any heating system – electricity, gas or steam.

The KBK Oven again with vertical airflow system cooks hanging products to dry, cook, steam and bake and comes without a smoker. KBK ovens can be supplied in all desired sizes from 1 to 14 trolleys with single or double row entrance

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customer side LCD screen. A convenient side loading printer allows for quick label changes, reducing downtime and generous memory space allows for numerous preset pricing options. The Ishida Uni-5 Series Scales are also certified for trade use in Australia and cost less than comparable price computing scales with printers.

Ishida Commercial Products are supported by a well-established and factory trained dealer network and sold exclusively in Australia by well-known equipment manufacturer Heat and Control. Contact us to be put in touch with your nearest dealer.

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www.heatandcontrol.com ■

Innovation Showcase: AMPC to bring inaugural innovation conference to Melbourne in 2022

In October 2022, AMPC will deliver its inaugural Innovation Showcase, bringing together red meat processors and industry participants from across Australia to experience new innovative ideas and technologies from AMPC's research and development providers and hear and learn from world-class speakers, listen in to panel sessions, and participate in various workshops.

The three-day event will be held from Tuesday 11 October to Thursday 13 October at the Melbourne Showgrounds and will explore the theme of "The future of red meat processing" which highlights the importance of adopting innovative solutions to build a stronger and more sustainable red meat processing industry.

AMPC Chief Executive Officer Chris Taylor said the Innovation Showcase

will be an immersive and interactive event that will give red meat processors the opportunity to see R&D solutions up close so that they can think about the adoption and extension of these technologies in their own businesses.



"The AMPC Innovation Showcase will be a great opportunity for industry to come together to explore the latest R&D and innovation, to hear from experts in other industries, to listen in to panel discussions on advanced manufacturing, sustainability and people and culture. There will even be a place where you can make your own meat product and learn all about how to value-add."

"There will be a tactile demonstration area simulating the design of a red meat processing plant, plenary sessions with world-class speakers and ample time across the event for networking".

A drawcard for processors will be a series of innovation workshops aimed at generating ideas that have significant opportunities for the processing sector and for cross-fertilising ideas and experiences from innovation managers within AMPC and from processing companies.

If you have any questions about the event, please email communications@ampc.com.au ■



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Tas Ag Co takes full control of supply chain after acquiring local abattoir

Founders of the Tasmanian Agricultural Company Sam and Stephanie Trethewey have acquired an abattoir near their farm in the state's north as part of their move to take full control of their supply chain.

Their new business, The Local Meat Co, is now operating and will ensure their own brand, Tas Ag Co, as well as local farmers, butchers and food service have access to the processing facility which includes an upgraded boning room.

The couple have invested in a range of new equipment which will enable them to produce the highest quality product possible for the processing of beef, sheep and pigs. Over time, they plan to integrate technology and carcass data reporting for their customers.

The facility is one of only a few abattoirs that offer service kills for local brands and producers in Tasmania, and ensuring their long term viability is critical. The Local Meat Co is committed to enabling farmers across the region to maintain access to markets which underpin Tasmania's unique brand and food story.

"We believe the future of food lies in returning to a decentralised system with transparency and ethics at the

core. The reality is, consumers want more integrity in their supply chain, and you've only got to look at recent events surrounding big food companies to see that. The narrative is changing and consumers are demanding better," said Sam Trethewey.

It's been less than three years since Tas Ag Co began operations, producing regenerative Wagyu cross beef. Over that time, Sam and Steph have grown their business rapidly; they now have three properties under management and a small team of young, passionate people to back them.

Since launching their beef to market last year, Tas Ag Co has been met with insatiable demand from around the country, and investing in the abattoir gives them the opportunity to finally service those markets.

"This is an amazing opportunity to put our money where our mouth is. When they buy our produce, Tas Ag Co customers will be investing in a true paddock to plate story with no middle man, and that is so rare," said Stephanie Trethewey. ■

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When complete, send your copy by mail or email. Include your name, address and phone number to go in the draw for another great prize from **BUNZL**. Results will be published in next issue of Australian Meat News. **Entries close 15 July 2022**

Last issues winners and answers, see page 11



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BOOK COMPETITION WINNER

Congratulations to Kenrick Beuth, PROCOM Pty Ltd – Livestock Computer Systems, McKellar ACT who won the copy of: *The Total Grilling Manual*, edited by Lisa Atwood

Answer: The “amazing” Diana Edwards

Kenrick creates computer programs for accounting, costing and management for meat processors and livestock operators. He says good systems are an essential tool for understanding the, often complex, relationships of products, processes and costs in the business environment.

Kenrick, enjoy the book and thanks for entering our competition. ■



WIN WIN

To enter our competition to win: *Fire to Fork*, by Harry Fisher (RRP \$39.95)

Answer the question below.

Send your answer and name and address & phone number to:

Australian Meat News Book Competition

Email: athol@ausmeatnews.com.au (preferred) or by post: PO Box 415, Richmond Vic 3121

Question: *Who won the Young Butcher Award at Meatstock in both Melbourne and Toowoomba?* ■

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KOLBE bandsaws, mixing/grinding, grinding

TREIF slicing, dicing, portion cutting

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REX vacuum filling, auto linkers, mince lines, forming attachments

STEPHAN cutting, mixing, emulsifying

LORENZO BARROSO clippers

VAKONA vacuum, massaging, tumbling, mixing, marinating

REICH smoke houses, ovens, fermentation rooms, water cookers

BOSS vacuum packing, dip tanks, auto packing lines

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