

Off the shelf

Helen Greenwood

Pigs in space

This high-tech butcher uses the Internet to sell his organic wares.

Sam the Butcher

371 ROCKY POINT ROAD,
SANS SOUCI.
TEL: 9583 1144;
www.samthebutcher.com.au

Open Tue-Fri 8 am-6 pm,
Sat 7 am-4 pm,
Sun 8 am-2 pm.



Best Buys

Scotch fillet \$25.30/kg; rib eye \$22.50/kg; lamb shoulder with rosemary and cracked pepper \$14.90/kg.

Down in Sans Souci, Sam Diasinos is the very model of a modern butcher. He is organic and online.

Nearly all the meat in his halogen-lit refrigerated cabinet is organic and if it isn't certified, it's hormone- and chemical-free. What's more, everything he uses for his prepared meats – such as rolled shoulder of lamb with rosemary and black pepper or the marinated duck breasts – is organic, too, from the lemons to the parsley.

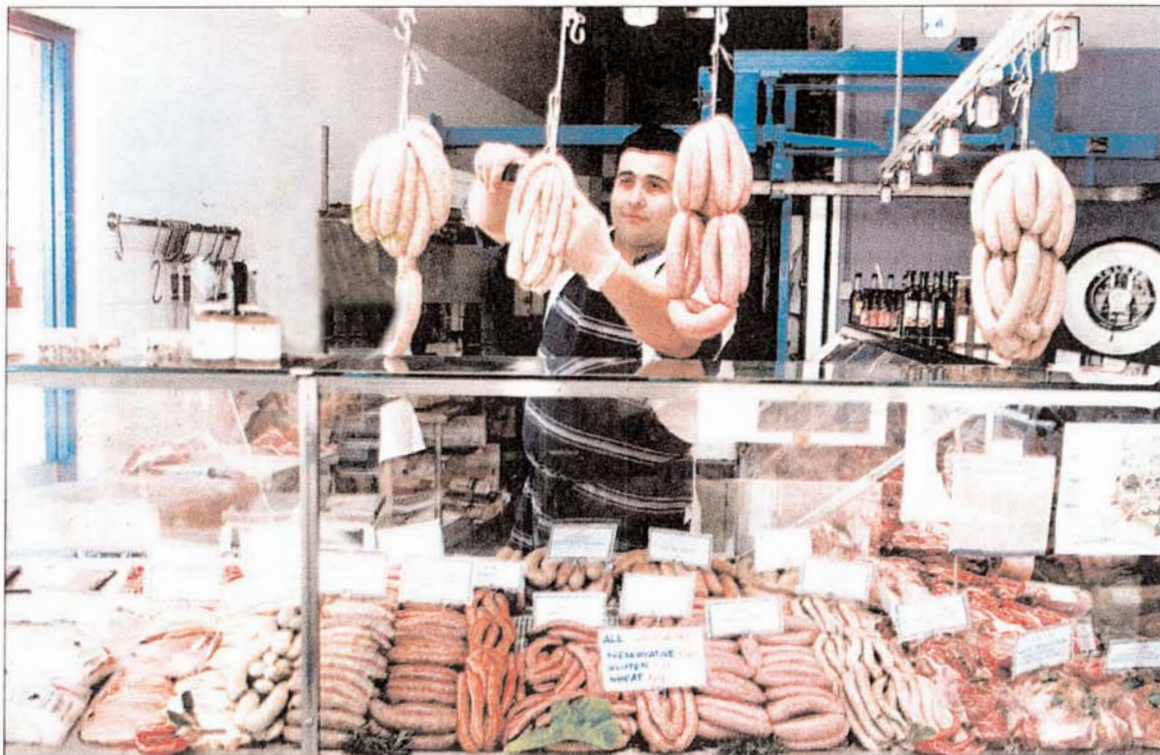
Diasinos is also plugged into cyberspace. On the counter, between the meat grinder and the cash-register, is his lap top. Diasinos logs on during the day to check for orders that he will then deliver all over Sydney.

For the quietly spoken 32-year-old, organic is the way of the future. "I believe everything we eat should have a label with what is in it and the way in which it is produced," he says.

It's a radical approach from a man with tradition oozing from every pore. Diasinos is a fourth-generation butcher: his father owns a shop in Brighton, his uncle is in the trade and his grandfather and great grandfather were butchers on the island of Symi in Greece.

Diasinos did his apprenticeship with his dad, serving the mainly Greek clients in his father's shop – where "everything was sliced fresh and thin, down to the mince" – for 15 years. But he was ready for a change and worked in the meat section of GPO at Martin Place in 1999. It was an eye-opener for the Greek boy from the beach.

"People were interested in where the meat was coming



Feed the man meat: Twenty per cent of Sam Diasinos's customers buy online. Photos: Edwina Pickles

from, they wanted to know the source of everything we were selling." He realised that he could go out on his own and go organic.

"About five years ago, my sister was diagnosed with a hormone imbalance and the doctors advised her against eating too much chicken or meat. Being a butcher, I started worrying about what I was selling. I found out what they used to make chickens grow so big so quickly."

He opened his airy shop last year, struggling at first to maintain a regular supply of organic meat. He now has four farmers supplying him, though it is still tough to get as much organic pork as he needs. When he doesn't, he has a hormone- and chemical-free alternative.

The range he stocks is complete, from spatchcock to 15 types of hand-made sausages (he even makes the casing), including a divine pork and porcini number. Apart from three kinds of rolled roasts, he doesn't display much in the way of prepared meat – that old Greek training is too ingrained – so he marinates, rolls and makes stir-fries to request, again using only organic ingredients. Many of these are also on sale, such as olive oil, bread mixes, rice and vegetables.

The online and phone ordering is gathering pace: about a fifth of his clientele don't come to the shop. But Diasinos makes deliveries to the first-timers himself, so he can meet them. "Although this is new-tech," he says, "the old ways reign supreme. I am still an old-fashioned butcher."