



sam the man

A Sydney butcher believes the best tasting meat is the purest so he only stocks certified organic meat and other organic products in his stores *Words Margaret Alcock Photography Andrew Lehmann*

ON A WALL in Sam the Butcher's Bondi store is a sign which reads in part: 'When you buy meat from us, it is certified organic. Guaranteed to be free of growth promotants, pesticides, preservatives and antibiotics... animals are reared outdoors in family units with plenty of space to roam and forage naturally and chemically free.' Check out the window and refrigerated display cabinets and you'll find a range of meat products that more than rival any conventional butcher's shop.

Sam Diasinos is descended from generations of butchers who originally lived on the Greek island of Symi. His father and uncles arrived in Sydney in 1955 and set up shop in Paddington. "They introduced cuts not normally available in Australia and got into hams and cured meats," says Sam. A continuation of this 'value added' philosophy is seen in Sam's own shop. He uses family recipes to prepare skewers of lamb souvlaki and the Cypriot pork sheftalia (caul-wrapped meatballs flavoured with onion, garlic, parsley and lemon zest). "Greek food is the purest form of cooking. Fifty per cent of farmers in Greece are certified organic just by farming naturally."

For the past 22 years Sam's father has run a butcher's shop in Brighton, and Sam and his brother Perry grew up working in the business. Sam opened his first shop in 2000 at Sans Souci. So what made him decide to go organic? "My sister had a hormone imbalance and doctors told her to keep away from conventional chicken. So we looked for a supplier with pure

products. The more I studied the situation, the more I realised there were also problems with people having allergies to the chemicals and antibiotics put into animal fodder."

Sam started first with organic beef, and he now sources the best beef, veal and lamb from certified growers in New South Wales and Victoria. His open range pork comes from Queensland, as does his chicken, turkey, spatchcock and duck. "Farmers are coming to a new level of appreciation of nature, and they now know they can make a living by doing organic farming. They rotate animals to different pastures every week, and this change of diet is of great benefit to health," says Sam.

As well as preparing all their own cuts, Sam and his staff dry-age the beef for six weeks, sell all the chicken and beef bones for stocks, and make a large range of gluten-free sausages. His most recent store at Beecroft has a smokehouse where meats are cured and smoked. Veal jus and duck and chicken liver pâtés are prepared by a chef at his Sans Souci store. Sam also likes to support other organic producers, stocking organic products that include bread, butter, feta, eggs, coffee, pasta, olives and oil, and even real licorice. He will prepare special cuts as requested, and for Christmas he will bone and stuff turkeys as desired.

For more details, visit www.samthebutcher.com.au. ☺

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT, Sam Diasinos in his Bondi store, an organic turkey, organic lamb souvlaki, part of Sam's range of organic sausages, Cypriot pork sheftalia – meatballs flavoured with onions, parsley and lemon zest.