

New Age Beef



Husband and wife team, Kevin and Danielle McMillan at Donalds Butchers in Uddingston have made a big investment in refurbishing their traditional butchers' into a stunning new-look shop.

The old shop was completely stripped out and then in the space of three weeks was fitted with new floors, ceiling, wall finishes, preparation units and a brand new shopfront with a fantastic showcase refrigerated display window.

As part of the refit the Lanarkshire butchers wanted to keep the long-serving black and white style of the old shop but in a new, modern theme. New branding was incorporated into a scheme designed by HK Interiors that kept the traditional black and white but with a modern twist including the installation of a brand new timber shopfront and illuminated sign.

The shopfront includes a feature refrigerated window display that catches the eye of all those who pass. The internal area had stylish wood-effect tiles laid to the customer floor area and black and white metro tiles to the wall with a specially selected cornice detail to the top of the tiles.





The custom built preparation and block units were produced with shaker-style panelling to further accent the blend of traditional and modern features. Having achieved the clean cut modern look Kevin explained how the ideas all came together.

"It was something that was needing done. The cabinet we had was still working but was looking a bit tired. That was the first thing that we looked at was the cabinet and we built everything around that."

CrioCabin was the preferred option so Kevin and Danielle, who is a design teacher at Garnock Community Campus, contacted Creative Retail Solutions in Poole.

"Danielle found the kind of cabinet she wanted in HG Walters butchers shop in London. We found out who did their cabinet and we contacted them. They brought in the shopfitters HK Interiors who they had worked alongside many times."

The dry aging cabinet was an idea that Kevin and Danielle came upon when the shopfitters took to them to London to show them some of their work. The Ginger Pig in Wanstead has a dry aging cabinet in their window and now Uddingston has a similar look. Kevin did have some reservations about the idea, he continued:-

"I had been concerned that people did not want to look at something that looked off putting. I did not like the idea but as soon as I saw it I knew that was what I wanted."

That made the couple stop and redraw their plans. They scrapped the plans for an S shaped cabinet that snaked out from the window in favour of an L shaped cabinet with a bespoke dry aging cabinet measuring 2.5m high, 1.5m wide and 860mm deep.



Work started on 26th May. The back table on a traditional concrete base was ripped out, and then everything was taken back to the bare walls. New tiles were fitted and flooring was laid.

The cabinets were positioned and the customer side which had been tight is slightly deeper now for customers. With brand new Bizerba scales installed the shop re-opened on Saturday 17th June and when it did it was hectic and busy. Since then Kevin described it like a "snowball rolling down a hill"

"We have seen an average 30% increase. Christmas in 2017 was the best that we have ever had and yet again we worked with Copas Turkeys."

The positioning of the screens at eye level just one of the important features that was treated with attention to detail. Defining exactly what the brand is remains work in progress since it was re-invented with the help of one of Danielle's former pupils Stacey Austen.

The new look, new branding and new fresh approach has added as much excitement to their customers as well. There had been rumours that the shop was changing hands and the butchers shop would close. Not so, in fact the refurbishment probably heralds a strong trading period ahead of it as a key store in Uddingston's Main Street.

"Most customers were pleased that we had managed to keep the traditional feel. We were looking for something traditional with a modern twist on it and everyone agrees that we have achieved that. We have chosen to be traditional, we will continue to focus on what we are good at and we are listening to all the customer feedback."

Some of that feedback suggested a more hands on experience for Donald's customers so the new design of the shop has included a demonstration area in which Donald's have started their Butchers Academy courses.

These allow customers to get first hand experience of cutting beef and lamb and making sausages. These are held in the shop over a period of two hours in the evening. Classes are kept small - four or five participants and they take home all they cut up.





For most however it's the steaks that this shop sells that creates the distinct difference. The tenderness and taste of the steaks is developed with care using the new dry aging window.

The dry aging cabinet cannot be missed and the feedback has turned out to be really positive. Kevin added:-

"It generates more conversations and we have had people ask if the beef was cooking and some that thought it was fake, bits of plastic that we had filled the window up with."

Kevin explained the whole concept of dry aged beef to his customers using Facebook. The key effect of dry aging is the concentration and saturation of the natural flavour, as well as the tenderisation of the meat texture.

The process changes beef by two means. Firstly, moisture is evaporated from the muscle. The resulting process of desiccation creates a greater concentration of beef flavour and taste. Secondly, the beef's natural enzymes break down the connective tissue in the muscle, which leads to more tender beef.

The refurbishment has had several ancillary benefits. Customers are more receptive to new products and the products can be more adventurous. Kevin and Danielle's commitment to the future of the business is clear and assurances have not only been to the customers. Kevin explained:-

"The staff can see the direction that we are heading in. We have tried to open everything up to them because it is not just me who needs to come up with ideas. The boys will send me messages saying 'I have seen this, how about trying these?'

"Before everything was pretty much me and Danielle. If we were trying something new it was either her or me who was doing it all. It is quite refreshing to see that they are investing in the future. They are obviously taking time when they are not in work to look at and think about things."

