

Banff destination for slice of success



When the Canadian Pacific Railway reached the Bow Valley in the foothills of the Rockies in 1884, it was the company's President, George Stephen who named the area Banff.

Stephen was to become the richest man in Canada and a great philanthropist but the Dufftown born Scot was to ensure that the destination with the Scottish name, would become famous as his company advertised the Banff Springs Hotel as an international tourist resort.

Just as Perth gets confused with its Australian counterpart, care has to be taken in references to the Aberdeenshire town of Banff.

The town with a population of 4000 has a longer and more prestigious history than the Alberta town of the same name.

It was confirmed by King Robert II as a Royal Burgh in 1372 and is considered to be the finest small burgh in Scotland.

Totally appropriate then that one of the finest butchers shops can be found in this historic coastal town.



Andy Grant took over at John Stewart Butchers in July 2017 but admits that he kept the change of ownership fairly quiet since he felt that customers do not like change and the shop was performing perfectly well as it was. So the name above the door remained the same, he continued:-

"It probably took a year before people actually realised that John wasn't here" confessed Andy "now everybody knows. We have changed the way the displays are set up and we have put on some new products but the meat suppliers are all the same."

Sales are led by beef with the steaks and joints being matured between 21 and 28 days. Beef, pork and lamb is all supplied by Munro's from Dingwall with chicken coming from Lomond Foods and KDI in Elgin.

Andy Grant was brought up in Fochabers and served his apprenticeship in Buckie with Alex, the brother of John Stewart. He left to join Donald Russell and over a 15 year spell there worked his way up to managerial level. Andy then worked in Elgin as Sales Manager for Dunbia and for John Davidson at Royans in Elgin before becoming his own boss.





For the first few months it took Andy some time to get used to his role as boss especially since he was the newest member of the team of eight. Ryan, Scott, John and Robbie, Stef, Ashleigh and Moira ensure that the shop's customers are greeted with a warm welcome and that is rewarded by its good loyal customer base which also includes supplying fishing boats and hotels.

70% of the business is retail meaning the shop opens at 8.00am daily trading until 5.00pm every day apart from a Wednesday and a Saturday when it is a 4.30pm finish.

The counter display has a strong representation of traditional cuts arranged in an appealing way. Then there is a limited range of stir fries and meat in sauces. The counter is across the shop leaving plenty room for customers to browse through the refrigerated wall cabinets on either side. Pies and ready to eat items to the right and fresh meat in packs offered as deals. Andy said:-

"When this is full it attracts customers and works very well. The three for ten (pounds) has worked very well for us. We price everything in here to £4 so the customer saves £2. We have a diverse customer base so there is something for everyone."





Sales of Sliced Sausage have increased ten fold since being crowned 2018 Scottish Beef Sliced Sausage Champions in May last year. Andy explained how that came about:-

"The only reason we entered was because of its popularity at the One Pot Stop Burger van just outside Banff. It sold more Lorne Sausage than we did in the shop they reported good feedback on it. So I thought let's put it into the competition to see how it does.

"We have had nothing but positive feedback. He was the one who encouraged me to enter because I couldn't believe how much Lorne he was selling. I probably would not have entered had it not been for the One Pot Stop but is the best thing that has happened to the business since I took over."

John Stewart Quality Butchers Sliced Sausages were firstly selected as North of Scotland champions, then they were mystery shopped and tested against the champions purchased over the counter in the other four regions of Scotland. These sausages were from Jedburgh, Port Glasgow, Kinross and Dumfries and the final took place at the Seaview Café, Weymss Bay.

Andy Grant felt overwhelmed when he discovered that he would be presented with the Scottish Beef Sliced Sausage championship trophy. So what was the secret in perfecting the sliced sausage recipe?

"I source all my meat locally and if you buy quality beef you will make a quality product." Naturally Andy was unwilling to reveal the seasonings that clearly make a difference too!



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
John Stewart
WAS SELECTED AS
Scottish Champion
FOR SLICED SAUSAGE

Paul Boyle
PAUL BOYLE
President, SFMTA


SCOTTISH
CRAFT BUTCHERS

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