

# Bringing home the bacon for over 160 years!

Ramsay of Carluke



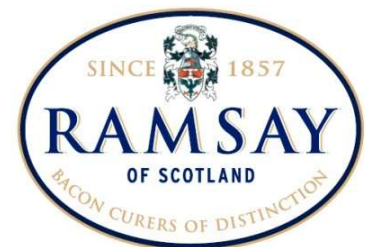
For over 160 years the Ramsay family has been producing quality bacon in Carluke, on the edge of the beautiful Clyde Valley.

Established in 1857 as a natural offshoot of home curing on their local Wellriggs Farm, the growth in the early 1900's within the bacon curing business resulted in the great grandfather of the current generation of Ramsays, moving to new premises on Carluke's historic Kirkton Estate.

Since then, in terms of service, quality, traditional methods and recipes, little has changed. As you would expect the highest standards in handling, processing and refrigeration are practiced on premises which are constantly upgraded, both to meet today's exacting hygiene standards and to improve efficiency.

Brothers Andrew and John Ramsay are the fifth generation to run the business maintaining the family connection. Their commitment is matched by the enthusiastic input of skilled staff whose priority is total customer satisfaction. They take great pride in the bacon they produce and don't mind the extra effort involved in creating this special product.

"Each generation have had their own problems and issues but they have adapted as necessary. The factory has changed shape on several occasions with extensions.

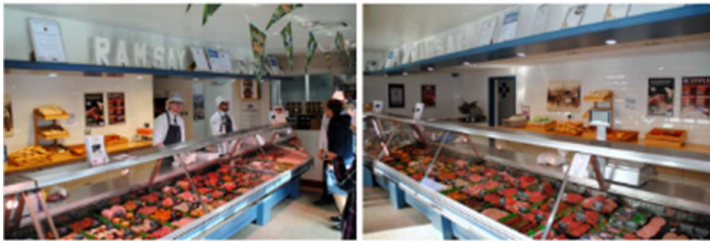






Andrew has worked in the business since he was sixteen and his mark has been to rip down walls and opening spaces up. As a SALSA registered bacon factory and approved cutting plant everything works.

At its busiest Ramsay's abattoir would be killing 120 pigs in their abattoir. The abattoir side was closed in 2013 and now around 50 pigs per week and pallet full loads of primals are sourced. When it comes to Ramsay's bacon, all the pigs are from outdoor-reared free range pigs which have been specifically selected for by their handpicked farmers.



At Ramsay of Carluke they strive to keep alive the traditional bacon curing skills that have been passed down through family from generation to generation. They maintain a close relationship with their farmer and by continuing to use these traditional skills, are confident that the quality of their products won't disappoint.



To gain a better understanding of rearing pigs, as youngsters Andrew and John were sent to work on their uncles' farms locally and in Perthshire. Andrew said:-



"It was always instilled into us that the farmer was important and you should always look after him. We would pay the farmer a premium for every pig to make sure that we get what we want.

"We buy only female pigs, that come in at 84 kilos. The outdoor bred pork tends to be Large White Landrace crosses with a touch of Duroc to make them a wee bit sturdier. "



It is bacon that Ramsay of Carluke have built their reputation on. Boneless and rindless sides of bacon are cured in large vats of old fashioned pickle made to the forefathers' recipe. Their bacon has no added water and after curing the sides are left to mature before being divided into the traditional Ayrshire cuts. A large percentage of the bacon is slowly smoked in their own smokehouse, filling the factory with a delicious mouth watering aroma.



"As early as the 1920s my grandfather won an award in Edinburgh for his beef ham. We still enter our core products for evaluation, they are the ones that are important for our wholesale market.

"Throughout the years, to accompany our bacon, we have created a range of award-winning sausages, puddings, haggis and cooked hams, all made to the same high standards as our bacon."



Andrew and John both now have sons, James and Scott working in the business, should they choose to continue they would be the sixth generation to run the business.

The shop in Carluke was developed from locals walking into the factory on a Friday seeking to buy bacon, ribs and shanks. Wholesaling of retail packs to the trade took off in 2000 coinciding with the refurbishment of the shop.

The shop is an important hub for Carluke and further afield. Promotion is focussed through Facebook pinpointing potential markets. Doing mail shots into local houses has also proved successful.

Beef and lamb is sourced through PR Duff in Wishaw with other local farmers supplying through the abattoir at Shotts.

One of the most successful and satisfying promotions has been a Master chef competition at Carluke High School. Between 200 and 250 second year pupils annually enter the Ramsay Challenge and Andrew explained:-

"The pupils work in pairs using gammon steak, pork for stir fry, anything to do with what we do as long as it comes from a pig. We supply all the meat they want for their recipe, they have to plan the ingredients and the cooking.

"When the teams are trimmed down the fifteen pairs in the final, I go down with two or three local chefs and one pairing wins the trophy. I have done it now for twenty three years and they actually have one girl who went on to appear on Masterchef.

"It is good when you are working with kids and parents. The kids have to cook at home to practice, so it all works to promote the business."

The business has always had an eye on a market much further away. Andrew continued:-

"My father had always said 'one day we will get into Harrods, so after he died I made appointments to see Harrod's, Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason and Harvey Nics. There was immediate success and Ramsay's still supply into Harrods.

"That was us discovering that there was a bigger market out there than what we were looking at."







BBC Good Food Show



ScotHot SECC

It is not just bacon that has broadcast the name of this Lanarkshire producer far and wide. Ramsay's Black Pudding has developed a cult following with even Lancashire supermarkets stocking the Scottish delicacy.

In the late nineties when Ramsay's were runners up in the Scottish Championship, they had only been making black pudding for two years.

"It was one of those things, I got let down by the supplier and we just decided to make our own. We had a go at it and what we have now actually only took us a few goes to get it right. We were making a batch of fourteen sticks a week. One of the other butchers asked if they could have some and from fourteen sticks we are now up to 1600 per week.

"We don't have a sales team. Customers tend to come to us. We attend exhibitions to find new markets but word of mouth is how we have grown. So the black pudding has ended up with Heston Blumenthal through one of the London chefs, Lawrence Keoch, who has won best breakfast in London twice using our bacon and our black pudding. He won it with the Wolseley Hotel and then Rose Restaurant.

"He was talking to one of Heston Blumenthal's chefs who was looking for a black pudding and Lawrence said that there was only one. So we started working with the Fat Duck back and forward until we still supply Heston Blumenthal's restaurant.

Blumenthal is not alone, Ramsay's Black Pudding is the choice of many of the nation's top chefs. It has won Great Taste awards and also when incorporating several additions including Tennents Whisky Lager, Green King's Black Stout, Garlic and Jaegermeister.

"Once we'll got the pairings and the balance of the herbs, we got to the stage where they are going to use it for their tasting and promotion events. Someone did a review on it and said 'sounded weird, tasted brilliant'."

Bacon and Black Pudding are the mainstays of this really old and well respected business, but with the market they have developed both on their doorstep and nationally there is no reason why that cannot continue for generations to come.

**Black Pudding**

"Ramsay's Black Pudding is a winner"  
- Tom Parker Bowles

"Best Black Pudding in Scotland"  
- Nick Nairn

"Keep making the fantastic pudding"  
- Heston Blumenthal

"Traditional and tasty, and crisped up really well when grilled."  
- Nathan Outlaw

**3 Star Gold in the Great Taste Awards with judges saying "Superb" and "Perfect texture and a beautiful taste"**

