

Uncle's smoking meats are a rare treat

By CAM LUCADOU-WELLS

THERE'S a strong sign that Bert Glinka and Brendan D'Amelio's Polish cured meats have won over the hearts and stomachs of its loyal customers.

On a normal week, they sell about a tonne of traditionally smoked, hand-made meat at the retro style deli Uncle's Smallgoods in Thomas Street, Dandenong.

At Christmas, all three of its wood-burning smokehouses are lit, flavouring about three tonnes of hams a week.

The brothers-in-law have also won an endearing nickname from their Polish clients since buying the long-standing business 18 months ago. A seasoned staff member dubbed the pair 'Young Uncles'. And the title stuck, becoming the name for their adjoining cafe.

At lunch, it's packed with English-speaking converts tucking into the succulent meat sandwiches and jaffles.

Customers who are hungry for such rare meat can be ravenous.

On one taste, a customer recently demanded: "Just give me more of

**EAT LOCAL,
DINE GLOBAL**

that bloody meat." One suggested an apt slogan to the Journal "Is Bert, Is Better."

By stepping into Uncle's, Glinka and D'Amelio left corporate jobs to follow in the footsteps of the iconic Poprawski husband-and-wife team.

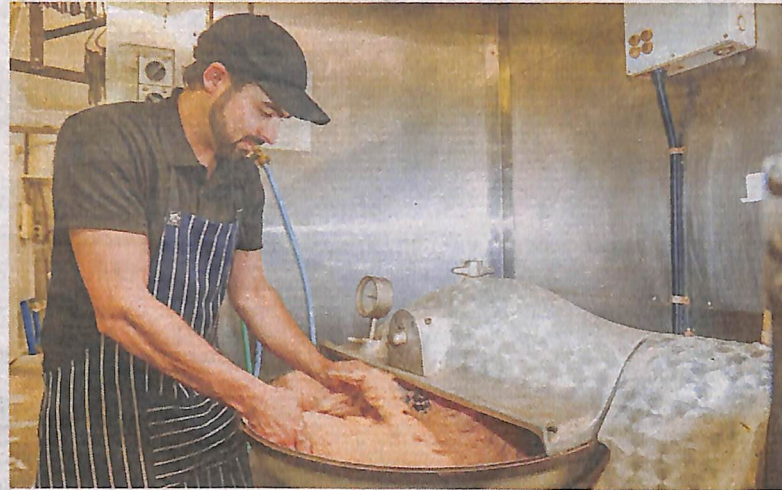
The deli had long seduced many with wood-smoked sausages such as kranskys, wiejskas and krackowskas as well as hams.

"We really focused on maintaining the quality," D'Amelio said.

"If we did that, we thought we're bound to get the support."

The 'young uncle's' previous experience was barbecuing Polish sausages and sauerkraut at weekend 'yumski' stalls around Melbourne festivals, but had honed a taste for cured meat since childhood.

Glinka, the son of Polish immi-



Brendan D'Amelio mixing chicken breakfast sausages. 135075

Picture: GARY SISSONS

grants, had been long visiting the butcher in tow with his dad.

D'Amelio had fond memories of his Italian family making salami and chorizio - something he's introduced to the Uncle's deli along with new

lines such as juniper berry sausage. D'Amelio, who caresses the filling as it spins inside a 50-year-old bowl cutter, says their creations are like their little babies.

Each day meats are hangd in cav-

ernous smoke-ovens out the back, sheathed in the campfire aromas of mountain ash before being boiled and cooled down.

The flavours are chiefly from the quality meat's natural qualities and smoke.

"We let the meat speak for itself," Glinka said.

Anyone who tries the ham slices will be struck by how substantial they are as they melt on the palate.

A cabana, whose skin has been air-dried for a couple of weeks, crackles deliciously in the mouth.

The flavours intensify over weeks.

There are a range of curiosities made on the premises - turkey cabana, smoked chicken breast, black pudding and a pork belly-Maryland chicken pate.

They are neatly complemented by Polish imports such as smoked cheeses and sweets, pickled vegetables and sauerkraut.

Uncle's Smallgoods is at 123 Thomas Street, Dandenong.

Phone: 9793 0135.

Men from Uncle's are smoking guns

BROTHERS-in-law Brendan D'Amelio and Bert Glinka, hanging country sausages in their smoke oven, quit their professional day jobs to take over the traditional Polish deli Uncle's Smallgoods in Dandenong.

For more of their story,
turn to page 4. 135075

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