

One of Scotland's oldest Butchers moves up a gear



It's more than the bicycles that are gearing up in Elgin as Royans transform their shop to seriously pedal their wares. For the old established business the arrival a brand new Marks and Spencer right across the road from them was quickly recognised as a real advantage. M&S proved that customers were in that part of Elgin High Street to buy food and all that was required was for the local butcher to attract custom across the street. Jim and Jean Royan set about creating a butcher's shop that would do just that.



In Elgin in 1850 James Fraser had gathered enough money to rent premises in Elgin High Street and open a Butcher's business. 157 years later the current owner and fourth generation, Jim Royan, is reaping rewards for a renovation of Royans at 190 High Street. Ensuring that Elgin's oldest retail business embraces the 21st century and maintains a tradition which now spans three centuries.

Jim Royan, who was the Federation's youngest ever President from 1973 to 1975, explained his reasons for renewed investment in the business:- "We believe that since 1850

we have been making a contribution to Elgin and the Moray community by being an employer, supporting the agricultural community in sourcing locally produced beef, lamb, pork and poultry and of course paying our taxes, (I wonder what they were in 1850!), and making a living.

"However, sentiment does not pay the wages and it is important to embrace changes in both the retail and social environment" he continued. "With my daughter Gillian and son James both pursuing their own careers we could have chosen to be a statistic of the demise of the small business. Instead we have chosen to refresh and revitalise the business with a combination of business decision, passion for our industry and a belief in our own community."

"Elgin's aspiration to "Making an Impression" will only happen if individuals, businesses and organisations actually do something."

Three important factors have helped make the decision. The current manager Willie Collie and his deputy Kevin Laing have been extremely loyal and are both very experienced butchers. Both



joined the business straight from school and both Willie and Kevin have attended courses at the world famous Dutch Institute of Meat (SVO) in Utrecht in Holland.

"We also believe that the independent specialist business offers a different and personal retail experience – it is a subtle combination and summed up by a journalist's observation on the demise of the Family Butcher.

"A real butcher the way they used to be communicates with his customer. He understands that they pay his wages. He remembers their name and flirts with you on a good day. This technique is the special art that has you returning for more lamb chops (if they were good) just for the pleasure of experiencing the act. There was a gallantry, humour and banter that disregarded age, background and gender. He talks mans stuff to male customers, and does that well, but he knows that women are his main customers"

Finally, the west end of Elgin, after years in the doldrums has been revitalised by the arrival of Marks & Spencer and just a hint that the local authority is recognising that a town needs a heart both socially and economically where the past meets the present.

So how does the "new look Royans" contribute?

Even before entering the shop customers will be struck by the bold new colours of green and gold and the use of the company crest combining traditional and modern.

Stepping through the door introduces the customer to a new "butchers shop" experience. A full wall colour montage of rural Scotland reminds the shopper of the close connection with the best of Scottish agriculture, and on the opposite wall a pictorial journey traces the four generations of the business from Elgin in 1850 to the present day.

The "New Look Royans" celebrates 157 years business on Elgin High Street in August





Striped aprons have been replaced by green and gold and for the summer months comfortable and cool polo shirts sporting the business crest. What has not changed is why we are here – to prepare and sell “the best of the Scottish Meat Eating Experience”. Naturally all their Beef, Lamb and Pork is sourced and prepared locally and like all other butchers in Scotland can trace the farm of origin. The development of Scotland’s Farm Assured Livestock, now a world leader, was led by Jim Royan while an MLC commissioner in 1990. He is quietly proud of its importance to customers confidence locally, nationally and internationally.

A striking feature of a modern butchers shop is the variety and quality of the sausages on offer. Royans are no exception. The traditional pork and beef are still in evidence but pork tomato & basil, Cumberland, pork & leek, pork and onion, hot Spanish, cranberry and rosemary are some of what’s on offer with new varieties including venison and wild fruit being developed. For people on gluten free diets a range of products is available.

Complimenting the traditional cuts is a gourmet or special occasion selection.

Boneless Saddle of Lamb – delicious and carver friendly, Boned and flattened Gigot of lamb ready to marinade and pop on the BBQ. Boned and stuffed Loin of Pork makes an interesting alternative. And two of the Royan families own favourites – Nancy’s London Broil, named after the customer who shared the recipe – using a 2 inch slice of rump steak marinated in soya sauce, honey, ginger, lemon juice, garlic and oil – BBQ for 20-25 minutes a real eating experience.



An interesting and succulent alternative is to use a single rib of beef for roasting on the BBQ. Ideal for two, three people the cut only needs salt and pepper and a sensation of garlic if you wish to experience that real beef flavour.

Expanding into local venison and organic pork is planned. At Christmas Royans sell the best turkeys in the UK from Tom Copas. Four years ago Copas Turkeys came to Elgin for the first time and since then their reputation has grown as a top Turkey Producer in Britain coupled with exceptional welfare standards, tender eating qualities and a really outstanding flavour.



Jim Royan's wife Jean is supporting the development of the business. A former "Catey" winner – the UK Caterer of the Year Award and for 25 years the Catering Manager at Gordonstoun School, Jean has established her own business "Serving Food Safely" to advise and support catering and retail food business. She has been responsible for developing the new and interesting complimentary product range now in stock.

"A significant number of people are really interested in traditional small scale business and care about product quality" Jean said. "We set out to find these people and where possible locally. The best of Moray dominates the products, from our meat to the international brands of Walker's and Baxter's. The mix of products, from Nairn, Aberdeenshire, the Borders and the Isle of Bute include chutneys, relishes, garlic, sauces and even turnip in gin & tonic and onions in vodka & orange. Where we couldn't source locally we went where the quality was like Copas turkeys.

In order to make shopping at Royan's a pleasant and interesting experience the product range will expand and vary and all the staff at Royan's will be contributing to that happening.

Jim Royan is very aware of the history and legacy of the business and this forms a nostalgic part of the new retail environment. A photographic journey of 157 years of history completes the new and refreshing look to Elgin's oldest family business.

However it is customers over the generations that have made it all happen. "We have several generations of the same family who shop at 190 High Street and many others who give us the pleasure of being "Pleased to Meat You" and we hope to add many more in the months and years ahead."

