



Kit Mavilio, Tracy Sturman, Carol Newman, Marion Rutland, Michael Rutland, James Rutland, Sarah Rutland, all members of the Rutland family.



You can't have a summer without a barbecue, and you can't have a barbecue without a few bangers. Sarah Cassells meets the family butchers that offer no fewer than 32 varieties of sausage. Pictures by Colin Finch.

A sizzling forecast

The Rutland family knows what the weekend's weather is going to be like without even looking out of their butcher's shop window. "We can always tell if the forecast is good by the amount of barbeque meat that goes," says James Rutland, one-sixth of the family who owns and runs the award-winning M&M Rutland butchers in Melton Constable. "I think people have become more adventurous with their barbeque cooking and our sausages are a way for them to experiment; they really seem to have captured our customers' imagination."

Imaginative they certainly are with 32 homemade varieties in the Rutland repertoire. There can't be many places where marmite-flavoured bangers sit alongside traditional pork, or strings of rhubarb and chilli sausages hang next to

Lincolnshires. And there can't be many butchers south of Gretna Green where you can pick up sausage-sized portions of haggis. Too many cooks might spoil the broth, but too many butchers leave the customer spoiled for choice!

The idea of working with family might not appeal to everyone, but the Rutland clan couldn't imagine it any other way.

M&M Rutland was set up in 1972 by Marion Rutland. She had been helping in her father's butchery since she was eight years old but never expected to become the matriarch of her own family business. During the ensuing 35 years her business and family grew concurrently and she was joined in the shop by husband Mike and then, one by one, by their four children who were raised in the family tradition.

Mike and Marion's children - who are now grown-ups with Rutland grandchildren



who pop in on a daily basis - are Kit Mavilio, Carol Newman, Tracy Sturman and little brother James Rutland. Although they are all fully-trained butchers, none of them grew up intending to follow in the family business. James had plans to be a racing car driver; Carol, a member of Pan's People. But over a 16 year period between the eldest and youngest they all naturally fell into butchery.

The family is now also supported by butcher Gary Howes, James' wife Sarah and Tracy's son Carl who helps out after school and on Saturday.

"It's actually lovely working with family as we're all working towards the same goal," says James. "Although it is a problem that we all think we're the boss!"

"Occasionally, we have the odd argument," adds Carol, "but it's usually over what we want to put in the meat."

Creative differences ultimately arise when it comes to recipes, but the Rutland children all bring their own individual strengths to the business: Carol is the cooking instructions expert; Tracy is great with ready meals, picking up ideas from her own demanding family; Kit specialises in slow food cooking, such as brisket and shin of beef; and James' forte is the sausages.

His inspiration comes from customer suggestions, cookery programmes, eating out and even the liqueur he enjoyed on his honeymoon. The result is an experimental mix of flavours that has grown to more than 30 recipes, of which banana curry and parsnip is currently a work in progress. Every day, at least 10 fresh options are made and sold for £3 to £4 per pound.

James credits much of the sausages' success to the meat used in their creation. All the meat sold at M&M Rutland is from free-range, Norfolk, marsh-grazed animals sourced from JH Lamberts in Earsham.

James says: "We buy all our meat on the bone. It means you can hang it, which is such an integral part of maturing it. It's quite labour intensive, but is the only real

way you can get such fullness of flavour and tenderness to the meat. To ensure superb quality, meat must be naturally reared."

The quality of meat doesn't just stop with the sausages either. The shop has 10 different varieties of homemade burger - including beef, venison, chicken, and lamb and feta - a selection of kebabs, lamb croquettes, ribs, chops, mini hog roasts and even haggis, which brought them national fame when The Sun newspaper picked up on the fact that they were selling them to customers in Scotland.

"People are so much more experimental with their barbecues too," says Carol. "So it's not just the sausages and burgers that go, but things like the kebabs and butterfly leg of lamb. We can also offer gluten-free versions of most of our recipes."

And, in an eco-conscious era, whatever you buy can be transported home in a reusable hessian Rutland bag. On sale for £2, all the money from the bag sales goes to the Balloons for Hearts charity, which is raising money to enable angioplasty patients to have surgery locally at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, rather than having to travel to Papworth Hospital in Cambridge for their operation.

It's their quality of meat and community-focused attitude that has seen M&M Rutland scoop numerous awards, including the EDP Norfolk Food Awards Butcher of the Year category in 2007, the East of England Top Shop Award and the Yellow Pages Family Business Award.

Not ones to rest on their laurels, the family is already working on increasing the sausage range further.

"We're all very creative," says James. "Some recipes ultimately work better than others, but any mistakes we make we eat ourselves!" ●

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EVERY SAUSAGE TELLS A STORY

James Rutland offers an at-a-glance guide to his 32 varieties of sausage:

- Barcelona bangers:** Inspired by an international football tournament, these taste like chorizo.
- Beef and horseradish:** Like a Sunday roast in a sausage.
- Boerewors:** Created from an authentic South African recipe brought in by one of our customers.
- Bombay dreams:** A Bollywood-inspired lamb curry sausage.
- Brambly apple:** A real favourite; very sweet and soft.
- Chipolatas:** Great for BBQs, children love them.
- Chocolate and cheddar:** Our Easter special.
- Cocktails:** The perfect party sausage.
- Cumberland:** Savoury with a peppery taste.
- Garlic:** Good strong flavour - exactly as it sounds.
- Haggis:** A bite-size haggis option.
- Herbies:** One of our first sausages, full of mixed herbs.
- Jerk sausages:** Caribbean sausages, slightly spicy.
- Kabanos:** A Polish sausage made from cheddar, smoked bacon and pork.
- Lamb, redcurrants and rosemary:** A sweet sausage that's great at Christmas.
- Leek:** A seasonal, savoury sausage.
- Lemoncello and thyme:** Inspired by my honeymoon in Sorrento, using a lemon liqueur from the Amalfi coast.
- Lincolnshire:** A traditional, peppery sausage.
- Marmite:** My baby! Even people who hate Marmite love this sausage.
- Minty lamb:** A great alternative to pork.
- Onion marmalade:** Sweet and sticky.
- Pork, bacon and onion:** A salty sausage loved by our male customers.
- Rhubarb and chilli:** A Thai-seasoned sausage that's perfect for summer.
- Sausage meat:** If you want to use our meat to make your own pies or sausage rolls.
- Spicy mango:** Carol's favourite - just delicious.
- Spicy Moroccan:** A lamb sausage originally made for a Moroccan customer.
- Stilton and pickle:** My favourite - a ploughmans in a sausage.
- Tennessee:** A sweet chilli sausage made from an authentic recipe brought in by a customer from Tennessee.
- Tomato:** An Italian-inspired, slightly sweet sausage.
- Traditional pork:** Still the favourite among customers.
- Venison and mushroom:** Made especially from local Melton Park venison.
- Wild boar:** The wild boar comes from Somerset and is the only meat we don't source locally.

All made using local, free-range "Old Spot" pork, unless otherwise stated.