

# Service the secret ingredient at the Peoples butchery

By KRISTI WETTON

In a week's time, one of New Plymouth's favourite butchers will hang up his cleaver after providing top cuts and a caring service for 23 years.

Bill Peoples' warm welcomes, special recipes and attention to detail will be missed by his loyal customers, who he greets by name.

The continuous stream of shoppers are visibly shocked when they find out he and wife Julianne have sold their business, Westown's Peoples Meats, and sign the visitors book with kind farewell messages.

Mr Peoples makes special deliveries to sick and elderly customers and makes them brawn birthday cakes.

He bought the business on his 28th birthday and will hand over the keys to the new owner, Murray Sattler, at the end of next week.

Mr Peoples recalls painting and cleaning the building in preparation for his first day of business.

"On the fifth day I opened the door — they were queuing outside, and I've never looked back."

The store has been a butchery since 1920, and a black-and-white photo of the original store is among the many pictures hanging on the walls.

It is one of the few traditional butcher shops to have survived.

Taking a mouthful of the stew he made earlier, Mr Peoples says he has been at work since 6.30am, and won't leave until after 6pm; the meal keeps him going through the long day.

His passion for the industry is evident, not just in his high quality products, but in his service.

The 50-year-old learned the importance of keeping customers happy when training in Wellington.

"The boss would grab you by the scruff of the neck and throw you out the shop if you didn't look after Mrs Jones. You'd be banished to the back to make sausages."

The lessons paid off — more than 85% of his customers are women.

There was a time when he wouldn't have dared tell women how to cook, but

most appreciate the advice nowadays.

His male customers are also looked after and Mr Peoples, who is the president of the Taranaki Master Butchers Association, has taught many how to cook meat.

He says one of the most worrying times in his career was when GST was introduced, in 1986.

"I thought it was going to be the end of my business. I freaked out — I was quite sick about it."

But there was no need to worry. Shoppers were still queuing outside the door on the day the tax came into force.

Looking through the shop's front window has been as entertaining as a reality television programme, he says.

"People walking along the street eat a lot more rubbish these days," he says.

Spotswood's Gael Hulena has been shopping at Peoples Meats for more than two decades.

She says Mr Peoples will be missed.

"He's the old type of professional butcher and has built up trust and loyalty between his staff and customers."

"He's got a grand little business and when you go there you get a sense of belonging to a family."

"If you go in the shop feeling a bit miserable, you'll walk out feeling a lot better."

Mr Peoples plans to pursue his interest in the meat trade and will check out what's happening in the industry during a working holiday in Europe.

On his return, he aims to compile a history of New Zealand's meat trade.

The Peoples, whose children have all worked in the business, live behind the shop and plan to stay there. It means they won't have to go far to buy their favourite dish — meat.

Mr Peoples said he was delighted that Mr Sattler, who worked at the butchery as a cleaning boy in the late 1970s, has bought the business.

"He'll do a good job."

**MOVING ON:** Julianne and Bill Peoples have sold their butchery after 23 years in business.

Photo: MIKE SCOTT

