

HELEN GREENWOOD

OFF THE SHELF

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, GOOD LIVING SUPPLEMENT - Tuesday, 20th January 2009

Snags like nonna made

Old recipes and some new ideas make a winning sausage combination.



Gourmet team ... Garry Aquilina, Carol Cropper and Andrew Lupton. Photo: Quentin Jones

YOU can't miss the yellow sign in the small shopping centre blazing out the presence of Nonna's Gourmet Sausage Company.

In this small factory and retail outlet, sausage maker Garry Aquilina, 34, has been stuffing natural skins with 26 different meat and seafood fillings for three years.

He is a modest man but proud enough to display the certificates he won at the Royal Fine Food Show nearly two years ago. He entered 18 sausages, earned bronze and silver medals for 15 and a gold medal for his chicken, sage and pistachio.

He's planning to enter the event again this year but missed out last year because he was struggling to keep the business afloat.

Aquilina's forte is the manufacture and production of smallgoods and fresh sausages. Distribution and sales are not. So he put an advertisement in the paper to sell the company.

That's when brother and sister Carol

Cropper, 42, and Andrew Lupton, 45, came into the picture.

The Yorkshire-born siblings are self-confessed dotty foodies. Cropper even turned out home-made sausages for a couple of years and sold them at markets because, she says, "I just couldn't find anything I liked".

Both have run businesses but never in the food industry. They pounced on the opportunity to buy into a quality food enterprise and insisted not only should Aquilina stay but he should be the third partner. "He is the story as far as we are concerned," Lupton says.

Aquilina made his first sausage at home with his Maltese-born parents at the age of 10. By 16, he was working for a smallgoods maker in Lidcombe, then moved to Zammit's in 1996.

Three years later, he joined A.C. Butchery and made sausages there for four years before going out on his own as a butcher. Six

Nonna's Gourmet Sausages

1/271 Newbridge Road, Chipping Norton,
9734 0769

Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm
gourmetsausages.com.au

Best buys

Garlic and chilli prawn sausage, \$21.99/kg
Garry's Special, \$15.99/kg
Chicken, sage and pistachio, \$15.99/kg

years later, he opened the Chipping Norton factory and shop-front.

His recipes range from traditional to modern and he favours a coarse, meaty style. He created the Roman pork sausages and the Maltese sausages by chatting to "old Italians and old Maltese".

Several in the range are Italian-style or classics and the rest are gourmet.

Four new ones have been introduced since Cropper and Lupton joined in August. Cropper brought the chicken, cheese and tarragon recipe and, of course, the Cumberland into the repertoire.

The prawn sausages, one with garlic, the other with chilli, are made using green prawns. Aquilina is licensed to use seafood in a meat-processing plant.

Their biggest retail client is Harris Farm Markets and they are now creating six gourmet patties for the stores.

You can also find Nonna's at The Deli, Potts Point; Forestway Fresh; Gourmet Source, Castlecrag; Paradise Markets, Crows Nest; Norton Street Grocer, Bondi Junction; and Menai Fruit World.

There isn't a single best-seller but Lupton says when he does tastings Garry's Special wows the crowd. Made from pork, roasted pine nuts, fresh shallots and provolone cheese, it deserves to be called gourmet.