



Original Vik's Country Meats building, opened in 1977.

VIK'S SERVES UP QUALITY BEFORE PROFIT

Vik's Country Meats' Grassie location is not a place you would happen by, but rather a destination. A destination that has grown so popular in fact, a second location was opened in Grimsby in 2008, followed by a plant expansion completed in 2012, to better serve the demand of their retail locations and wholesale customers.

Viktor Laciok opened Vik's in 1977 after retiring from farming, as a way to continue making his Polish kielbasa and sausage that was already well-known and loved by family and friends. Fast-forward to today and you'll find Vik's son, Rick, and grandchildren, Craig and Sarah, now

manage the significantly larger operation. The product line has grown but the famous kielbasa remains a fixture and is made today the same way as day-one using a secret recipe and quality, locally-grown meat. "People count on it being good every time," says Rick, "and we deliver."

Other best-sellers include their bacon (served exclusively by a Niagara-on-the-Lake resort) and fresh sausage, sold in an assortment of unique flavours (24 in fact!) including Northern Maple and their award-winning Pineapple Curry. Peach was the latest sausage flavour of the day. Rick insists it's the variety that his customers love. When

asked about their own personal favourite meats, Rick prefers the smoked sausages and his daughter Sarah, "definitely the rib-eye steak." Both agreed; however, that the kielbasa straight out of the smokehouse is, "to die for."

While the customer base has grown and changed over the years, a large contingent remains those that have been coming to Vik's since the start. And second and third generations have followed suit. Rick noted the younger generation has different shopping habits; however, they buy less each visit, but come more often. "People don't have the same large family gatherings anymore," explained Rick. "They don't need to purchase large quantities in one visit."



After plant expansion, completed in 2012.



The industry has also changed, according to Rick, who believes to start from scratch today would be incredibly difficult. There's the considerable expense, many rules and regulations to comply with, and without an established customer base, building a profitable business would be a challenge. To that end, Rick considers himself blessed to operate an established company, one built



PEACH SEASON IS HERE!

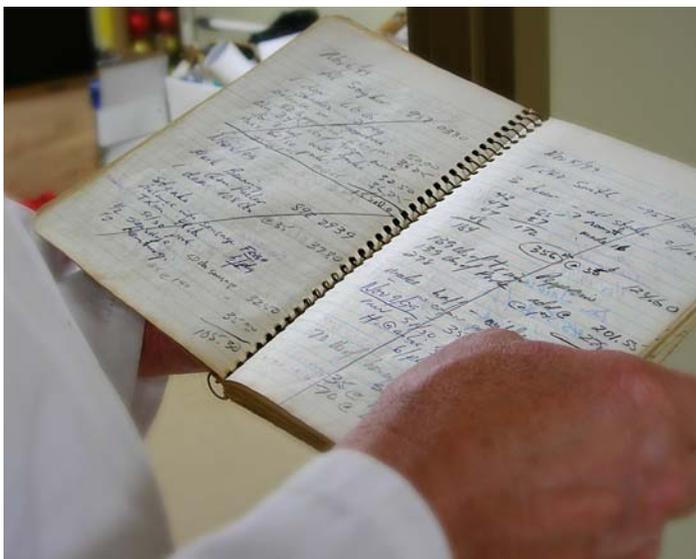
Come into **VIK'S COUNTRY Meats** to get some fresh **PEACH SAUSAGES!**

While quantities last...



Northern Maple and Peach Fresh Sausages are just 2 of 24 flavours available.

Vik's Motto: "Make everything as if you are making it for yourself and your own family."



Rick's hand-written notes from as far back as 1995.

as far back as 1995, carefully detailing the likes and dislikes of each hunter so that he can repeat or adjust the order with ease. Talk about customer service!

When the work day begins at 6:30 a.m. and doesn't end for 12 hours, the early mornings and long days may discourage even the most dedicated person. So why do they do it? For the satisfaction garnered from people happy with Vik's products. When they come in and say it was fantastic: that's what gets Rick and his kids out of bed in the morning. Knowing that their customers get great enjoyment out of what they produce. Viktor taught his son to not be as concerned with cost as with quality. "Just make good product, he said," shared Rick. "That is why people come back." And so long as Vik's continues to stick to the plan, the people will keep coming, year after year.

in a time when the country thrived on small businesses. Rick is also happy he has children to transfer the business to when he retires – to carry on the tradition and uphold the family motto, "Make everything as if you are making it for your own family."

Rick and his son Craig pride themselves in making quality products. "It's not the cheapest," Craig admits, "but it's the best." And although some products are brought in to fill out the display case, customers always skew towards Vik's products before they consider purchasing other's. "Our customers don't want what they can get elsewhere, they want Vik's because it never disappoints," explains Craig.

Even the largely seasonal customers, the hunters, recognize the consistent quality. Vik's further processes meat for about 50-60 hunters each year, and has been growing that segment of his business for roughly 15 years. Growth has occurred mostly through positive word of mouth as Vik's provides custom services to each individual. In fact, Rick has kept hand-written notes from



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