



## Australian Chef's Recipes

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## Jonathan Gianfreda

1997

Jonathan Gianfreda has been working around the clock at his factory since early November to try and keep up with the demand for Christmas hams. Since starting production of hams in 1984 the business has grown hugely and it's not just in Melbourne. Jonathan's of Collingwood is a well recognised name in Sydney, Brisbane, Hong Kong and other parts of Asia.

He says that the quality of Australian meat is recognised internationally but we are not selling what we could on the world market.

"Australia is still a meat wealthy society. We can eat steak as meat is a relatively cheap commodity. But we need to go to the next step and produce for export. Not a day goes by when I don't get requests from all over the world for produce. But I can't guarantee supply."

Jonathan recalls an order from the Italian chain, Standa. "They came out in 1994 and were absolutely knocked out by the quality of our produce. They put in an order for 5000 milk fed lambs to be air-freighted each week to Rome, one shipment was sent over but then no follow up was possible. There is money to be made for a lot of people. But Australia is not doing it. We could be selling tons of milk fed lambs if we had the infrastructure to do it."

Jonathan believes that there is a missing link. The primary producers and the suppliers are not communicating. Nor, he believes, does AusTrade, give enough support and encouragement to produce exporters.

He recalls a time when a shipment of meat was left over a weekend at Hong Kong airport causing him to lose 25% from an order worth \$27,000 because of a spelling mistake on the documentation. No one in the Australian bureaucracy was prepared to help. But orders and enquires keep on coming in from Asia. He has recently had interest in hams from Shanghai and in Hong Kong has a standing order for 1000 cotechino, 1000 saucisson lyonnaise and 1000 cotes de boeuf. He can produce the first two but not the beef. "Again, I couldn't guarantee supply."

The one company which is able to deal with the huge potential of the Asian market is DanPork, the huge pig producing company set up in Northern NSW. "They now have a monopoly on pig production in the country, they produce mega thousands in a day. And they are using that as the platform to launch into the Asian market. There is a huge demand for pork meat in Asia."

But if Jonathan is disappointed that Australia is not selling the products internationally that it is capable of producing, he is more than pleased with his part of the Australian market. The shop in Smith Street, Collingwood, which he bought in 1979 (before that he operated it in conjunction with Extra Meats) has become a mecca for Melbourne's foodies.

It was his father, Alfredo, who bought the first

BUSINESS



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smoking oven which operated from his home garage initially. After getting bacon right, they moved on to hams and the rest, as they say, is history. The interest in the hams and sausages and the prepared (ready just to heat) meals which Jonathan's has become famous for came from Jonathan and wife Toni's travels in Europe. They always visit their native Italy (both families came from the Veneto region) and though Jonathan loves to eat prosciutto there he no longer makes it in Melbourne. He stopped making it not because the market does not want it, but because he doesn't believe that he can do it properly. "I can't get the right tasting pig because we can't feed our pigs the way they do in Northern Italy and also because the cool room techniques simply can't match up with that used in Italy. I just can't get the results that I remember eating when we are there for a month I will have a plate of the San Daniele on my left and a plate of the Parma on my right and I am forever trying to taste, taste, taste. And when I get back here, I am trying to duplicate that and I could never get anywhere close to it ."

"The Italians have taken an art (with prosciutto crudo) and made it into a science." Much the same could be said about Jonathan's Meats at 122 Smith Street, Collingwood. Jonathan Gianfreda is no ordinary butcher. He is well informed about the meats he sells and loves to pass on that knowledge to his customers.

This would seem a most sensible way to be selling his products. But it is not common practise in Australia according to Professor John Morris, former vice-president of Safeways U.S.A., who has been checking our local butchers and supermarkets.

"What people get served here is not something customers in any other country would put up with," says John Morris. He talks about finding bad quality meats, lack of advice and bad presentation. But he went unannounced into Jonathan's and found he got good and knowledgeable service."

In fact Jonathan is so keen to find out about what he is selling that he took a trip recently to Ythanbrae to learn about and to taste the marbled beef being produced there under John Morris' advice from PertAngus stock.

The marbling consists of rich streams of fat throughout the meat which makes it really juicy and gives it a delicious flavour. Unfortunately we won't be able to buy that meat locally until sometime next year but you can be sure that Jonathan will know about it.

Currently in stock at Jonathan's are Christmas hams, turkey breast roll filled with chopped spinach, pine nuts and bacon, whole turkeys with stuffing -- [Joan Campbell's](#) or chestnut and apple, terrines of duck, squab and cognac or of pork, white veal and pistachio. The terrines are made from a really good recipe and are a very easy dinner party first course or a summer cold platter. My favourite is cotechino sausage and I asked Jonathan for his recipe.

## **Cotechino with Cabbage**

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1 or 2 Cotechino Sausages

2 Tablespoons Olive Oil  
2 Onions, chopped finely  
200 grams bacon cut in pieces  
1 Cabbage, sliced (with the core and hard ribs removed)  
1 Green cooking apple-peeled and chopped  
1/2 Cup White Wine  
3 Tablespoons White Vinegar  
10 Juniper Berries  
1 Sprig of Sage  
Freshly ground pepper  
Salt  
A little water  
1 Tablespoon brown sugar

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Place the cotechino in a large pot, cover with water and bring to the boil. Simmer very slowly for 1 hour. Remove the lid and allow the sausage to cool in the water. Remove skin from the sausage.

In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat the oil and saute the onions, apples and bacon until soft. Add the cabbage and continue to cook until the cabbage has wilted. Add the stock, wine, vinegar, juniper berries, sage, sugar and pepper and stir the mixture. When it comes to the boil, cover and reduce the heat to a simmer.

Continue to cook for about 30 minutes, checking from time to time to see that there is plenty of liquid in the pot (add a little water if necessary). Just before serving, taste for salt, slice and add the cotechino, and cook for a further 15 minutes.

Serves 6

**Mietta O'Donnell**  
**Article published in the Herald Sun Food & Drink Section on the**  
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