



# BUTCHER

Victor Puharich

Sausages  
Rib-eye  
T-bone  
Scotch fillet

Victor Puharich, meat supplier

**Victor Puharich comes from** a long line of butchers. His grandfather, father and brothers were all butchers in Croatia, where he was born. But Puharich, who runs Vic's Premium Quality Meat in Mascot, didn't feel the calling. "In Croatia, it's full on," he says. "You do the slaughtering, you do everything. It's not like here where it's a really clean job."

But when Puharich arrived in Sydney in 1971 and began working with his brother for a meat exporter, the calling finally took hold. Married at 22 and a father of three by 24, he also worked as a kitchen hand at Les Girls in Kings Cross five nights a week. For five years, he worked from 4.30am to midnight. "There was not much sleep," he laughs.

After working for more than 20 years with Andrews Meat, Puharich, 56, opened his own store in 1996, where his premier beef, game and offal cuts earned him fans among chefs (including Tetsuya Wakuda and Aria's Matt Moran) and even the odd celebrity (he still stocks the fridge of one Russell Crowe). "When I started it was just basic cuts," says Puharich, who supplies 80 per cent of Sydney's hatted restaurants with Kurobuta pork and 15 different cuts of wagyu beef. "There was not much difference between the top quality and the bottom. Now the difference is unbelievable."

Eight years ago, he relocated to a state-of-the-art facility in Mascot and now turns over \$35 to \$40 million each year.

Despite a growing empire, which includes setting up shop in Shanghai in July, Puharich still makes regular trips to country farms and abattoirs looking for the next Kurobuta ("the wagyu of pork") or Macleay Valley Rabbit. "Vic has brought a lot of integrity and honesty into the meat game," says Justin North. "He sources really good product."

He has also found another Puharich to join the meat business. Son Anthony works side by side with his father. "He's well educated and young and most of the chefs are young people – they speak the same language," says Puharich proudly. "Anthony's knowledge and passion is unbelievable." Like father, like son. (s)