



# WHAT'S IN STORE

**Russell's Butcher & Deli** strives to meet customer expectations — and then some.

**S**HOPPING FOR A meal in Toronto can feel like a chore. It's a task you know you should do, but one that isn't always enjoyable — like flossing. Russell's Butcher &

Deli on Roncesvalles Avenue is hoping to change that.

"We wanted to take the intimidation out of a butcher shop. We really wanted to make it a welcoming place where we give you great customer service and guide you through cooking everything," says Christopher Terpstra, who owns the neighbourhood shop with his wife Sarah. (Together they also own Alimentari, the Italian restaurant just a little further down the block.)

If you were to create a 'friendly neighbourhood butcher' set for a movie, you'd probably want to model it after Russell's. The front doors are dressed in a green-and-white-striped awning. Underneath, a sandwich-board displays pleasantries and specials handwritten in chalk.

"We found a lot of butcher shops are very masculine — 'rah, rah' meat cleavers — and

dead animals, that kind of shit. We're not like that. We wanted to be more friendly and soft. We were very focused on that, from our graphic design to our interior," Terpstra says. Inside, orange-and-yellow checkered tiles wrap around clear cases of different meat cuts sourced from a handful of small Ontario farms. "It's all pasture-raised, really good quality and healthy meat. We get everything as the whole animal as well, which is a challenge but also a lot of fun," he adds.

In the short few months they've been open, Russell's has already acquired many loyal regulars who are greeted by their first names when they enter. As for first-time customers, they are treated like old friends from the start, too. Russell's specializes in top-quality meat and prepared foodstuffs, but it's people they always put first — from paying their employees competitive wages to being real with their customers.

"Meat gets a bad rap and my thing is just eat good meat and eat less of it." Terpstra continues: "I'm not going to try to sell you on coming in for a steak every single night, nobody needs that. I'm a horrible salesperson, but I'd rather be honest." **f**

## MEATY MATTERS



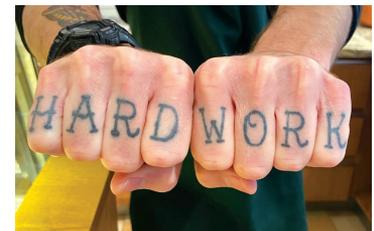
### A cut above

Since Russell's uses the entire animal, you'll see many unique cuts you wouldn't typically find at a grocery store such as Ontario lamb belly. "We tell you about the meat, get you just what you need and also something you may not be used to eating," says Terpstra, who learned how to butcher in Italy.



### On the house

"We have a lot of prepared food that is cut, marinated and ready for the oven or to throw on your table... We make a few things in-house, too. We make our own roast beef with rosemary and garlic, which has become really popular and we make a sandwich with it as well," Terpstra says.



### Beefed-up benefits

"All of our staff have full health benefits and get paid very well for the industry. That's something that Sarah and I both wanted to create. We don't need to make as much money. We'd rather keep staff around longer and have them be happier and live better lives than take everything home for ourselves."