

From butchery to braai Meat matters in South Africa

What's trending in the butchery?

Meat is part and parcel of South African culture, and it is no surprise that an in-store butchery or meat department holds much interest for South African shoppers. A butchery has the ability to build differentiation for a store through the quality, innovation, price and range of its meat product offerings. Fuelling the demand for meat is the time-honoured braai, where the weekend shop inevitably includes poultry and meat products for outdoor cooking.

According to a report from Euromonitor International, meat has performed well through retail channels in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic, despite economic pressures that were and still are the result of lockdown measures.

“Chicken has seen significant growth due to budget conscious purchasing, while bulk meat buying has increased as consumers took advantage of its lower cost per unit price.”

Key insights

- Supermarkets are the most popular outlets for South African customers purchasing fresh and frozen meat. Grocery stores are accessible and convenient, as customers prefer to visit one store for most of their household needs. Specialist



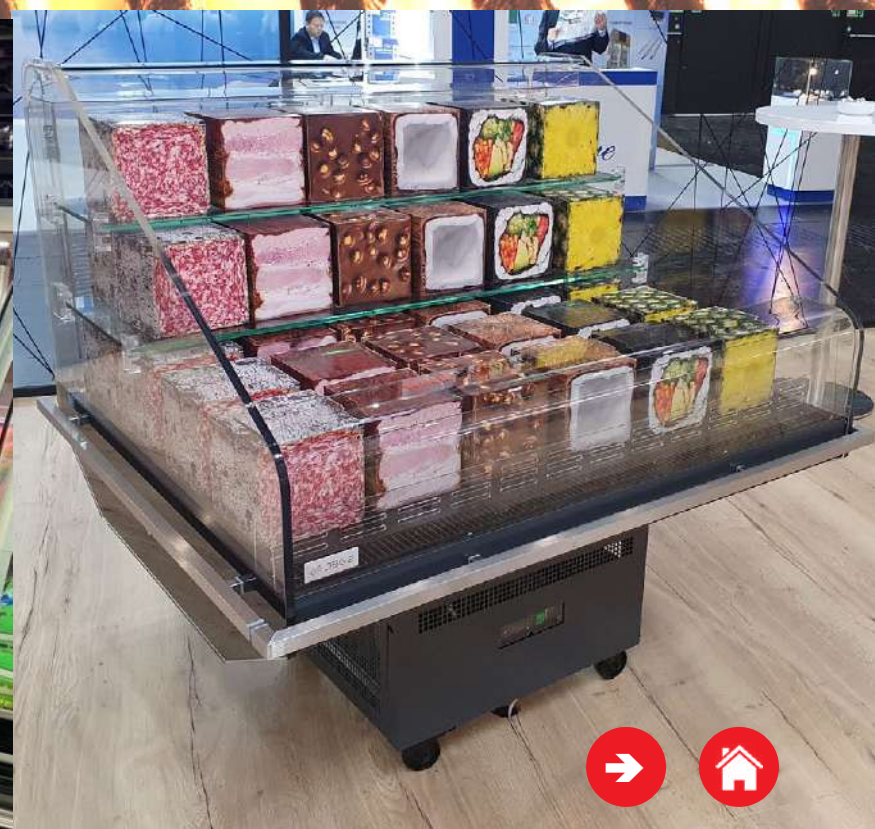
butcheries are also popular destinations for discerning meat-eaters who prefer their meat and meat products prepared by expert butchers, as well as for speciality meats and meat products not usually offered by supermarkets.

- By popularity, chicken (generally considered a healthier option) remains the unanimous favourite among all income groups, representing approximately 60% of all meat consumed. This is according to a report by Statista.com, which



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Customer Convenience

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Promotional Items

examines per capita consumption of meat in South Africa. Poultry is followed by beef, valued for its versatility and perceived safety; pork, which is lean in both price and fat content; and then lamb and mutton, which are highly popular although consumed less on a daily basis being relatively costly.

- Undeniably, the coronavirus pandemic has seen customers cooking and eating at home much more and there is strong demand for convenience and variety. Bulk-buying across all income groups is also as important as ever. For some, bulk discounts are vital, for others, a reduced number of shopping trips and stocking up for safety's sake is the driving factor.

Value-added poultry and meat products cater to changing lifestyles

Thanks to lockdowns, restaurant restrictions, and ongoing safety concerns, South African consumers are spending far more time in the kitchen and because of this, certain new factors now play an important role in their buying decisions. Products that offer timesaving, convenience, and variety become increasingly attractive when they make it easy for the cook to put something different on the table. Consumers want to have a healthy protein option to serve their families and simultaneously are more willing to try new products that lighten the cooking load with easy-to-prepare items.

Consumers are also looking to replace entertainment and restaurant meals, which makes new flavours and innovative dishes very appealing.



Value-added meat products can provide the convenience and quality of restaurant meals, creating an opportunity for retailers to increase sales by smart cross-merchandising for special meal occasions. Preparation guidance and serving suggestions further improve the overall value when side dishes are added to pre-marinated meats, bringing together a complete meal.

Pre-marinated or pre-seasoned meats, cook-in-the-bag portions, and pre-cooked heat-and-eat

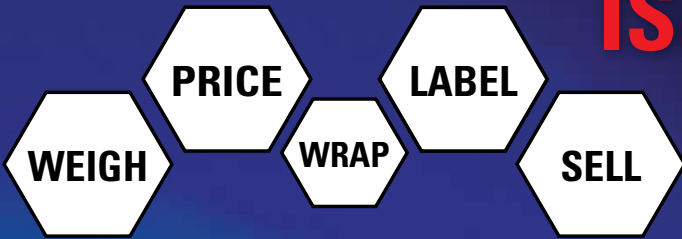
dishes such as casserole, lasagne, and curry are a growing trend.

Retailers continue to embrace this trend, as the ever-expanding array of own-label and in-store brands increases, along with ready-made deli options that can be dished and packaged to each customer's specifications.

Cost is always a factor, and value-added meats may come at a higher price than plain butchery options. When you provide the customer with

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a clear value proposition that communicates the benefits and quality of the meat, they may be more willing to spend on these items. Costs could also be saved with the option of choosing less expensive cuts of meat that can be improved by marinating. With most of the prep work done, the consumer can save anything from twenty minutes to several hours of their valuable time.

These solutions conveniently address another inescapable South African problem – load shedding. Checkers' 'Ready to Braai' range of prepared meats and side dishes is marketed as “the ultimate dinner time solution during load shedding.” When shoppers can pop into their local supermarket and pick up a prepared meat item to braai and serve up in thirty minutes even when the power is out, this offers real convenience.

“In this day and age, time is considered by many to be our most precious commodity, there just never seems to be enough of it, which is why we’ve seen a dramatic rise in everything convenience-orientated,” says Belinda Ollewagen, Marketing Manager at N1 Meat Wholesalers.

“Our hunger for convenience is here to stay, it’s clear to see in the range of ready-made products available on our favourite retailer’s shelves – many of whom source the best quality meat South Africa has to offer from leading local meat wholesalers like N1. While it might be on the pricey side, many believe that what you lose in Rands you gain in time, and the fact that you don’t have to choose a recipe or source all the products yourself is a big game-changer,” says Ollewagen.

CASE STUDY

Your in-house butchery as a shopping destination



The Springbok SuperSpar in Springs has been owned by the same two families for nearly forty years. The store is based in a lower- to middle-income area, explains owner and manager, Miguel Jorge, who says, “We have very price conscious customers who are always focused on value for money. Being close to the centre of town, we cater for all. There are many schools, old age

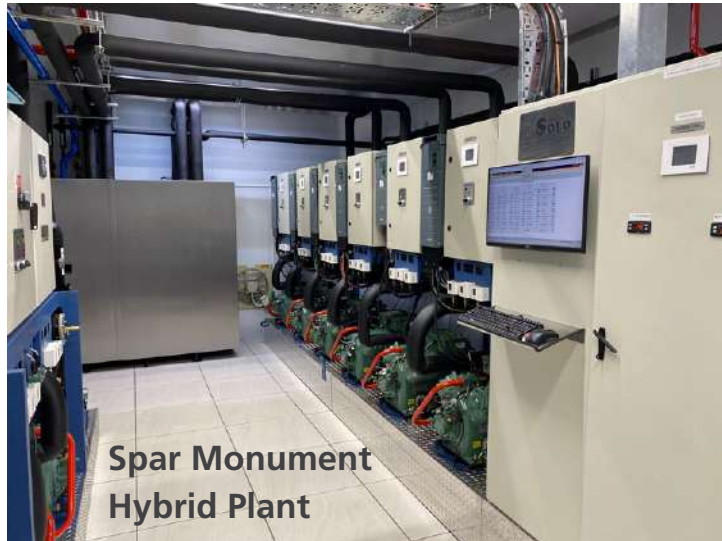
homes, businesses and big industries in the area who look for that value in our store.”

Jorge has noticed a shift in the purchase of meat from their in-store butchery since the beginning of Covid-19, with growing demand for cheaper protein options due to the increased financial pressure that many households are experiencing. This view is borne out by a report in The Financial Times that showed South Africa descended into recession in the first quarter of 2020, even before the pandemic accelerated the downturn.



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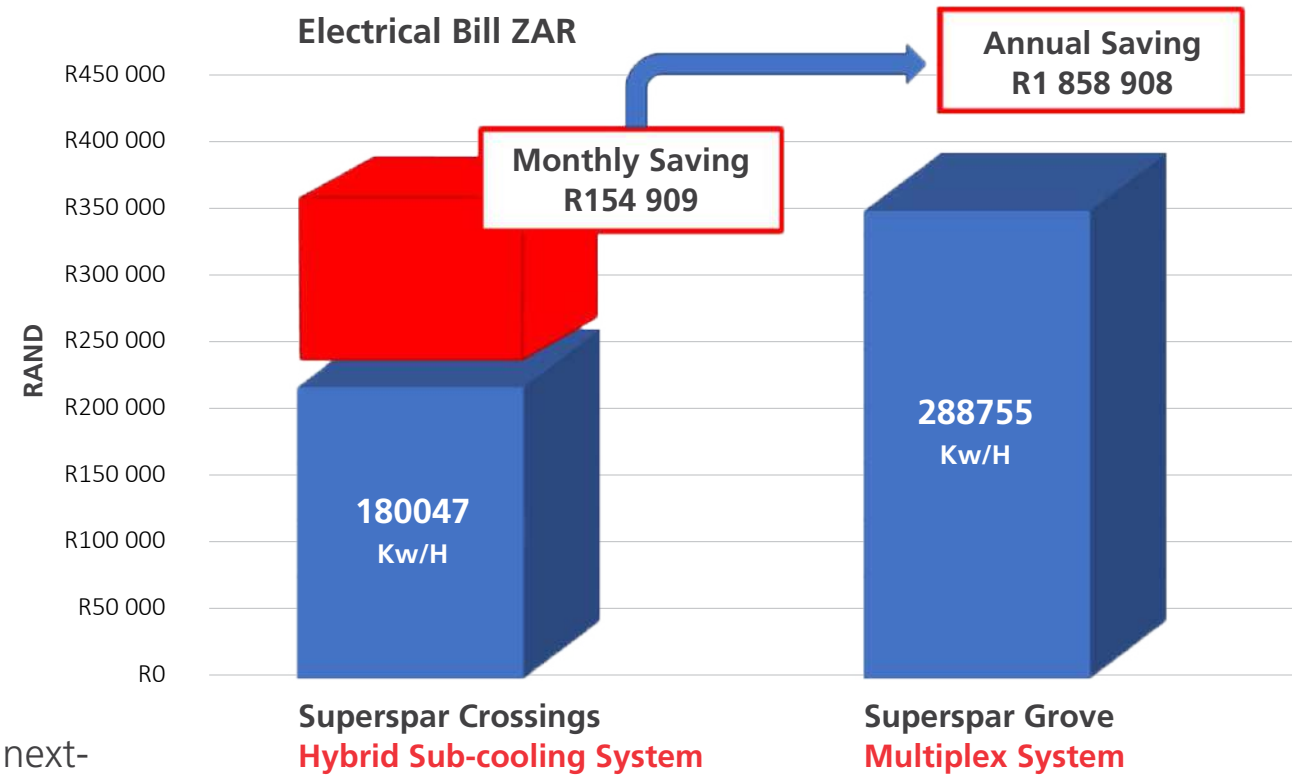
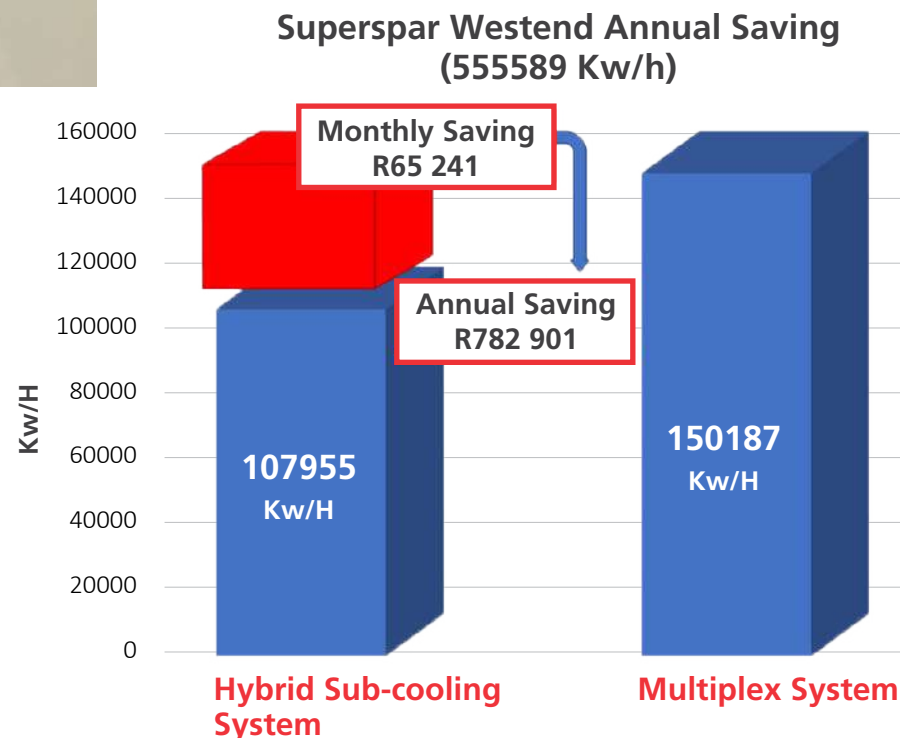


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“Another change that was evident straight away was the increase in sales in our lines that we typically associate with take away establishments, like burger patties. This could be due to restaurants and fast-food outlets having been unable to trade as normal at various times in the last year, financial pressure on consumers, and possibly consumers just feeling safer preparing all their meals at home,” says Jorge.

Of course, there are those time-tested meat products that can always be relied on for sales, and there are seasonal changes that determine the popularity of certain meats and cuts.

“During the colder months, stewing meat and mince take the lead as cooking methods lean towards comfort foods. Sales of products such as boerewors, which is associated with summer and outdoor braais, tend to lose impetus in winter.”

Jorge says, “During the festive season or over Easter we find that higher priced meat such as lamb becomes more popular. As it forms part of traditional meals in different cultures, consumers are willing to spend more on those products for special occasions.”

With regards to regular promotions, Jorge says these are vital in ensuring that customers keep returning to the store and its butchery. Trends indicate that customers are looking for bulk deals at good prices, which allow them to buy enough to last the whole month for financial reasons and to



decrease their shopping excursions for safety and health concerns.

On creating a destination shopping experience with their in-store butchery, Jorge says ...

“We have always strived to ensure our customers get value for money in our butchery. We sacrifice GP so that we can guarantee quality at a price our customers can afford. We know how important meat is in a customer’s decision on where they shop.”

“We produce unique wors and boerewors lines that are not made with the standard spice and recipe that an external supplier might offer. Chilli Wors and J’s Boerewors are our butchery’s signature recipes, which have gained a loyal following in the area.”

In-store demos provided by spice suppliers and cross-merchandising with various seasonings and marinades are an excellent way of creating hype around certain products. Free samples have always been successful, as customers can taste and decide for themselves. “Smart merchandising is using convenience as a great way to upsell when

the customer already intends to purchase one of the items anyway,” says Jorge.

Marketing innovations have also increased the number of feet through the door, says Jorge, who credits SPAR’s direct-text platform Text Me with an increase in sales, thanks to its ability to send the store’s unique promotions directly to their customers.

The store’s butchery staff are well-trained both in preparing the products and in customer service – any one of their personnel are readily available to assist customers with product or recipe enquiries. They are also all trained extensively in the safe use of the butchery’s equipment, as well as the maintenance of that equipment to ensure continued safety for employees and customers.

Hygiene is one of the most important qualities in a butchery. This includes sourcing the best-quality



meat, maintaining the cold chain, and ensuring all product preparation, packaging, and storage areas are cleaned to the highest standard.

“We trust our products will, over time, prove to the customer whether our butchery can be

trusted or not,” says Jorge. “The appearance of the staff and butchery itself, and how the customer sees them, is also important. This is why a well-lit butchery showing how clean the environment is and showing staff following strict hygiene protocols is vital for reassuring the customer of standards kept in the store. We have recently gone a step further by putting glass doors on all our fridges and making our entire preparation area temperature controlled. This means the cold chain is kept better than ever before, reducing wastage and spoilage. Customers recognise that it has a positive impact on the products they buy and that the store takes hygiene and safety seriously.” Jorge explains, “Buying the best quality meat or having the best

equipment will mean nothing if hygiene is not given top priority. Following a daily cleaning routine and using quality cleaning products go a long way in making sure the product and the store’s image is not negatively affected.”

Packaging is of equal importance in enticing and retaining customers. Recognisable and attractive packaging can cut through shelf noise and make a product easier to identify. Good quality packaging also ensures the safety and hygiene of the product. For Jorge, the impact on the shelf life of their meat products and how it appears to customers is of major significance. “Spending a little bit more on quality packaging can go a long way in elevating the product in the customer’s eyes,” he says.



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Braai tips (Courtesy of Nettalie Viljoen of People's Post for News24)



To braai is quintessentially South African. Here are some top tips and tricks for the ultimate braai masters. The Silwood School of Cookery in Rondebosch offers these tips in their Steak Masterclass ...

- A head of fillet should never be smaller than 1.8 kg or bigger than 2.2 kg. Anything bigger or smaller than this suggests there was something wrong with the animal – it was either undernourished or injected with growth hormones.
- Steaks must always be braaied from room temperature for a more even cook-through.
- For medium-rare steak, grill for one minute per centimetre of thickness per side. So for a 2 cm thick steak, grill for two minutes per side.

- Grill bone- or fat-side first (this is known as 'rendering the fat' – the meat absorbs the flavour of the fat as it melts.) Cut shallow incisions 2 cm apart in the fat to stop it from curling.
- Braai chicken or wors first over hot coals, then scrape over the coals and cook your steak.
- Add salt after you have cooked your meat. Adding salt before cooking just dries the meat out.
- Don't use a fork to puncture your meat or your tongs to press down on the meat as this causes fats and juices to escape.

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Top braai tips from Yuppichef readers

- Add bay leaves or branches to your braai flames to flavour red meat.
 - Par-cook chicken in the marinade and use the braai to brown it off to avoid dry meat.
 - Squeeze fresh lemon over lamb chops to make them extra tender and enhance the flavour of the meat.
 - For lemon and rosemary lamb chops or chicken, layer a braai grid with rosemary stems and lemon wedges. Lay the meat on the top, and then cover with another layer of rosemary and lemon.
 - Buy your meat in bulk and freeze portions infreezer bags with the marinade for delicious pre-marinated meat.
 - Marinate pork chops overnight in crushed garlic, mustard, brown sugar, lemon juice and Aromat.
- (www.yuppichef.com)

Equipment innovation in the butchery

Innovations in butchery equipment have seen reduced food waste and increased product safety and consistency. This can be seen in the addition of doors to refrigeration cabinets, which extend and stabilise the cold chain, improved thermostat controls that allow production areas to be completely temperature controlled, and high-precision weighing, cutting, and packaging equipment that ensures consistency, reduced waste, and increased consumer trust. According to ButcherSA, every successful butchery needs the right equipment.

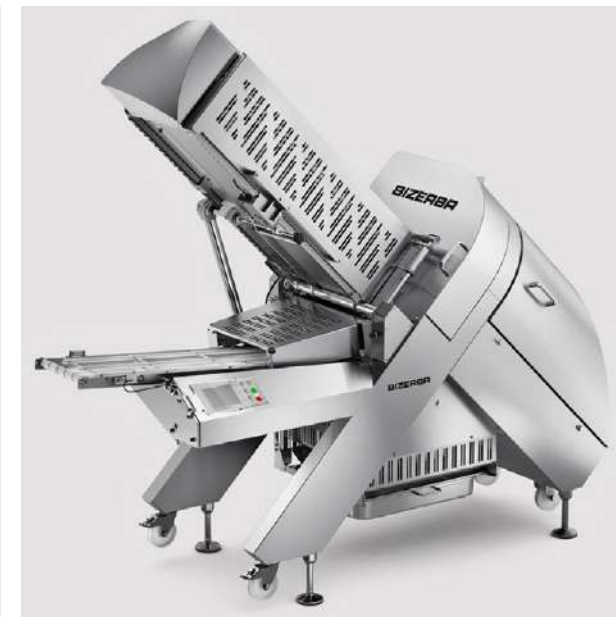
- Weighing and barcode-printing scales for price-embedded and weight-embedded barcode systems should, wherever possible, be linked to your Point-of-Sale (POS) system, as this will improve efficiency and cost management. Companies like Bizerba provide high-end butchery solutions for weighing, labelling, advising customers, and transactions. It goes without saying that the correct maintenance of this equipment will ensure its reliability and consistency.
- Slicers need to be high-precision, and decisions regarding what needs to be sliced – and how – will affect what machine you choose. More intricate machines are more expensive but can handle an array of cooked and uncooked meats, deli cuts, fish, and cheese. This versatility can be of great benefit to your butchery offerings. Correct cleaning to avoid cross-contamination and to maintain strict hygiene is paramount.



Retailers can manage their entire production line from automated scales.

(Image supplied by Bizerba)

- Proper packaging is essential for maintaining product hygiene and safety, as well as correct labelling that contains information such as sell-by and best before dates, weight, price, quality guarantee, ingredients and so on. Packing equipment includes clippers to seal the ends of packaged processed meats such as polony; vacuum packaging machines that ensure the packaged products are properly sealed for extended shelf-life; and heat-sealing machines for proper closure of packaged meat and other products



Slicers need to be high-precision, and decisions regarding what needs to be sliced – and how – will affect what machine you choose.

Pictured here is Bizerba's Industrial Slicer A660.



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Thermal tray sealers enhance display and shelf life, while vacuum packers remove air from packaging to keep products fresher for longer. (Images supplied by Bizerba)



Tray Sealers



Burger Patty Formers



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Wrapping Machines



More specialised equipment includes filling systems such as sausage stuffers, burger patty formers, emulsifiers, bowl cutters and mincers for making processed meats, pickle injectors, brine pump and tumblers, as well as table mincers or larger mincers depending on what types of meat you are mincing and for what purpose.

(Images supplied by Bizerba)

- Display cabinets are another source of innovation. Adding doors to refrigeration cabinets increases shelf-life and stabilises the temperature, which helps maintain the cold chain. Energy-efficient LED lights are also favourable, as they provide energy savings while also ensuring high quality product display, a key factor in attracting consumers – if the meat looks good, they're more inclined to buy it.



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Sustainability and origins of meat products

In tandem with reducing wastage and improving shelf-life, mid- to upper-income earning consumers are also beginning to focus on sustainability and provenance, or where their meat products are coming from. Free-range, organic, grass-fed, antibiotic-free, sow-friendly crates – these are all label claims that can affect buying behaviour. Sustainable and eco-friendly farming and production processes are increasingly attractive to a growing number of consumers. These are not the only trends making waves in the meat and butchery industry though.

Lynca Meats believes the South African pork industry is on the brink of a revolution. In January 2021, Lynca Meats CEO Brent Fairlie said: “The pork industry has had a disruptive few years. The Listeriosis crisis had a major impact on consumer confidence, then only a year later we were hit with an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, followed soon after by Covid-19. These three events effectively caused periodic significant reductions in the pork price, which all role players in the industry (farmers, abattoirs, retailers and so on) passed on to the end consumer, resulting in a long-term increase in the demand for pork. Still, it is the only protein on the market today that is as affordable as it was four to five years ago.”

Pork fillet and pork tenderloin are lean cuts – as lean as skinless chicken breast, according to the Lynca Meats website. This plays to the health-



conscious consumer as pork provides a protein-rich and versatile alternative to chicken. Fairlie goes on to add that “litre for litre, raising pigs is significantly less water intensive than raising cows, making it a more environmentally friendly option than beef. Many people might be also surprised to hear that South African farms are world leaders in a more ethical way of treating their animals, moving away from high-volume factory farming toward more humane methods.”

Butcher knows best

By far the most important factor driving repeat sales in your butchery is trust. Consumers trust that their butchery is providing them with the best quality meat at the best possible price. Freshness, tenderness, and consistency are key. Variety is important, but so is value-add and convenience.

Special offers are a big drawcard for all shoppers as meat, particularly premium cuts or brands such as Wagyu can be expensive. Being able to provide advice is a must, as is the ability to offer bespoke cuts. For lower- to mid-income consumers, product launches and new innovations in terms of taste or production are more likely to be purchased close to payday, when money isn't quite as tight as usual. South Africa remains a meat-eating country, so for now at least, the butcher is king. And a successful butchery should be one of the cornerstones of your business. **SR**

Sources:

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CASE CLOSED

Energy Saving Solutions

Glacier Door Systems has introduced the Air Shield ('Close the Case') Glass Door retrofit solution for refrigerated supermarket display cases, as well as the Eco Leaf Replacement Glass Door for existing glass door freezer rooms and glass door freezer display cabinets. Both solutions guarantee energy-savings in an ever-increasing energy cost environment. Part of the well-established Universal Industries Group, Glacier has 26 years' experience and are acknowledged industry leaders in refrigeration door technology. Innovative and forward-thinking, the company is built on cutting-edge technology, technical expertise and a customer-centric approach.

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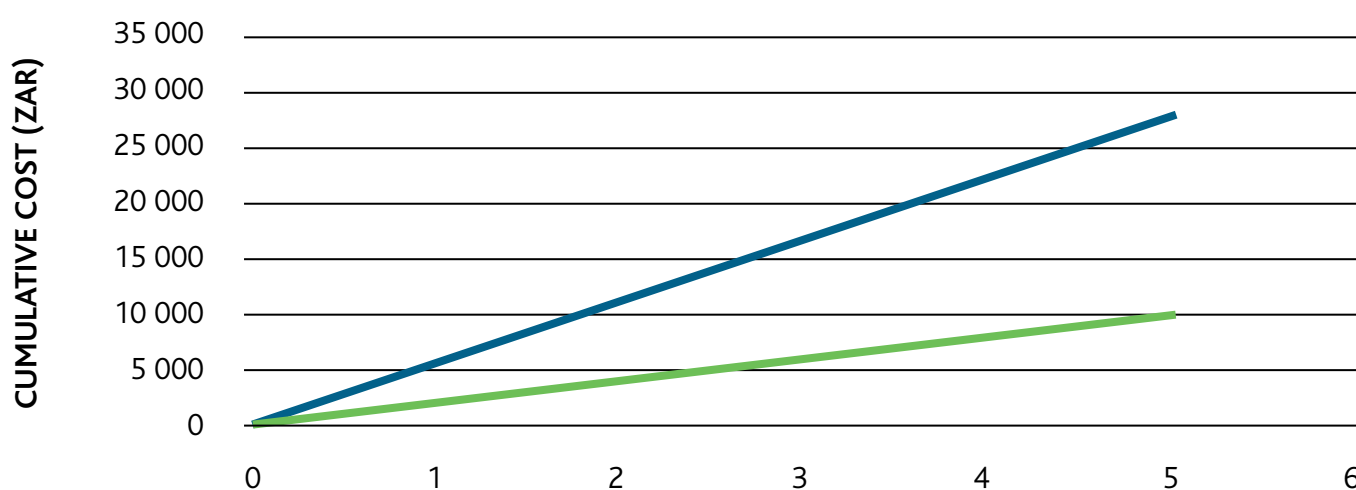
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The Eco Leaf door is 64% more efficient than the standard door. The value proposal is based on R1.31 per kWh and 64% energy saving. These are averages based on our experience and can be validated per store.



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