



HD Makin' Bacon

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The pork industry has developed 'bacon week,' to get across a serious message to Australian consumers about the prevalence of imported meat and confusing labelling.

PIP COURTNEY, PRESENTER: More than 75 per cent of the bacon **sold** in Australia is made from imported pork. The pork industry believes if more consumers knew this, they'd choose to pay a bit extra and **buy** Australian.

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To spread the message about the prevalence of imports and confusing labelling, the industry developed Bacon Week, which, now in its fifth year, uses the magic of bacon to get across a serious message.

(Sound of a cafe)

WAITER: New order, chef. Fried eggs and bacon. Thank you, table 15.

PIP COURTNEY: Even after cooking kilos of it for his customers, Brisbane chef Stephen Hansell still finds bacon irresistible.

STEPHEN HANSELL, HANSELL AND GRETEL CAFE: Ooh! That sizzle, that crack, that pop, that fatty, juicy, gorgeous... If bacon could be a lady, I'd definitely marry it.

PIP COURTNEY: Australians eat 6.3 kilograms of bacon a year. But few realise 75 per cent of the bacon **sold** here is made from imported pork.

Stephen Hansell doubts his customers know the figure is so high.

STEPHEN HANSELL: I would definitely say no, they're not aware of that. Even myself wasn't 100 per cent sure of those stats. When I heard those stats it kinda freaked me out a little bit too.

PIP COURTNEY: Stephen Hansell buys bacon from the Black Forest Smokehouse in Sydney. When told he'd have to pay a dollar a kilo more because Australian pork was 30 per cent dearer, he didn't baulk, as he wanted to **buy** local and he says it tasted better.

STEPHEN HANSELL: I **m** all about the flavour. It's gotta be the flavour, the flavour, the flavour.

PIP COURTNEY: Now aware of the scale of imports, Stephen Hansell will support Bacon Week next year.

MITCH EDWARDS: Thanks for coming, guys. It's our pleasure to share this...

PIP COURTNEY: Begun in 2010, Bacon Week and its exclusive cocktail party is one way the industry is fighting to regain some of the market share it lost after import protocols on pork were relaxed in the mid-'90s.

ANDREW SPENCER, AUSTRALIAN PORK LIMITED: People don't understand when they're consuming bacon, when they're eating bacon, that there's a very large chance that that's come from a pig grown on the other side of the world.

MITCH EDWARDS, AUSTRALIAN PORK LIMITED: About two-thirds of it is made from imported pork. And that equates to over \$10 million worth of imported pork coming in every week, goes into the bacon and hams that are available.

PIP COURTNEY: The imported pork Australian smallgoods companies use to make bacon comes mostly from EU countries, such as Denmark and the Netherlands. It's cheap and it's subsidised, but there are restrictions. It must be frozen, off the bone and processed on arrival.

ANDREW SPENCER: North America and Europe do not trade on pig products, so they look for very free-trading nations to get rid of that excess product. Australia is one of the most liberal trading nations in the world. It ends up on our shores and that's why the Australian pig farmer has a lot of competition from imports.

(Sound of pigs)

PIP COURTNEY: The relaxing of import protocols was devastating for the industry.

Queensland producer Andrew Jones remembers it as a dark time.

ANDREW JONES, PORK PRODUCER: We had to change direction and send that towards the fresh meat market, which was a completely different market - different shape, size, animal. It's also put a huge amount of pressure on other parts of the industry, on how many farmers went out of business, how much people bought from feed mills, where they sold their pigs.

In the last 20 years, you've probably seen a reduction of, say, 4,500 pig producers back then, to maybe 1,500 now.

The number of abattoirs have reduced, the number of feed mills the opportunity to market has reduced, so this has been a major problem.

It's put a ceiling on our price on most years on the way through. It's also taken out a lot of confidence in, not only from a producer point of view, but also from along the supply chain, on reinvestment into the future.

PIP COURTNEY: Yet the public probably wouldn't have noticed anything?

ANDREW JONES: Not a thing because there's pork always in the store and there's bacon and ham always there.

PIP COURTNEY: Schulte's Meat Tavern, an hour from Brisbane, has been making its own bacon from local pigs for 60 years.

It gets behind Bacon Week every year.

PETER SCHULTE, SCHULTE'S MEAT TAVERN: We've put it on special. We've got it on Facebook, our web site, we've got radio ads goin', newspapers are doin' stories on it.

PIP COURTNEY: The industry says its PorkMark logo, a guarantee of Australian product, is now recognised by 50 per cent of consumers.

SCHULTE EMPLOYEE: You're looking for some bacon?

CUSTOMER: Yes I am actually.

PIP COURTNEY: Schulte's customers are still surprised they're even necessary.

PETER SCHULTE: A lot of them only thought hams were coming into Australia. They're really surprised.

PIP COURTNEY: As well as promoting the logo...

MITCH EDWARDS: Good morning, guys. Welcome to Australian Bacon Week.

PIP COURTNEY: ...this year, Australian Pork Limited used Sydney workers in a light-hearted experiment to gauge consumer concern about imports.

MITCH EDWARDS: The choice to buy a bacon and egg roll made with Australian pork. Or a bacon and egg roll made with imported pork.

ANDREW SPENCER: The Australian bacon product was 40 cents a roll more.

But through the whole morning - and we **sold** 1,500 bacon and egg rolls - 90 per cent of them were made from the Australian product. You could argue that the 10 per cent that weren't were bought by people who didn't have the patience to stand in the Australian queue for long enough.

MITCH EDWARDS: Happy Bacon Week! Thanks for joining our beautiful line to bacon joy.

PIP COURTNEY: Guests at the Bacon Week cocktail party drank bacon-flavoured bourbon and beer and dined on all manner of bacon nibbles.

There was Kevin Bacon ice-cream and the Miss Piggy, a strawberry, star anise, white chocolate and bacon dessert from renowned pastry chef Adriano Zumbo.

ADRIANO ZUMBO, PASTRY CHEF: It wasn't very hard at all, you know. I mean when you take bacon, it's pretty salty and when you make dessert for me, I always remember salt, sweet, bitter, acidic - if you always stick to those sort of things you can get a good balance.

WOMAN: How can you say no to sweet sugar and bacon?

MAN: Yeah, got dessert by the tail.

PIP COURTNEY: Guests dined on Australia's best bacon, while the annual awards ceremony got underway.

MITCH EDWARDS: A beautiful appearance, with subtle sea salt flavours and a hint of brown sugar...

PIP COURTNEY: Judges gave the Best Artisan Bacon award to Pialligo Farm Smokehouse from Canberra. While Pialligo can't compete on price with bacon made from imports, Charlie Costelloe says it wins on taste.

CHARLIE COSTELLOE, PIALLIGO FARM SMOKEHOUSE: There's a lot of commodity bacon eaten in supermarkets and people are very happy to pay \$7 for a kilo of bacon. But they're not so conscious about maybe where that came from or how it's ended up at \$7 a kilo. I can't **buy** the raw material for \$7 a kilo.

PIP COURTNEY: Pialligo's bacon is done the Irish way. Cold-smoked, cured, then cooked.

Peter Curry says it's more expensive, but they're selling a tonne a week.

PETER CURRY, PIALLIGO FARM SMOKEHOUSE: Once you taste it once, you see the difference between it and the regular run-of-the-mill bacon and I don't think there's any comparison. People will always go for the quality at the end of the day.

My vision for pork is to create pork the way it was done years ago. Not pork that is just injected with water and all the sulphates and all the rubbish.

MITCH EDWARDS: Thanks, Frank. Congratulations.

(Sound of applause)

PIP COURTNEY: The winner of the best bacon available nationally was Bertocchi Brothers from Victoria. A new product, the **company** approached Coles with the suggestion it stock a premium Australian bacon.

FRANK DI VIGILLO, BERTOCHI SMALLGOODS: (accepting award) ...a family-owned **company**.

We looked at that and we saw that as an opportunity. And we helped develop, you know, what we believed to be a premium-quality bacon. Because that's what we believe is lacking in the supermarkets today.

PIP COURTNEY: Andrew Spencer is heartened by the rise in artisan bacon producers, as bacon follows in the footsteps of Australian coffee, olive **oil** and **cheese** to carve out a high-priced niche.

ANDREW SPENCER: It's also consistent with how we see our pork that we manufacture in Australia or that we grow in Australia, being of very high quality. So it suits - it's really suited to those high-end food service or high-end restaurant-type smallgoods products.

PIP COURTNEY: But back to the task of educating shoppers about how to **buy** Australian. He says it's not easy, as labelling laws are confusing - one could argue deliberately so. It's why the PorkMark is so important.

ANDREW SPENCER: For example, bacon made from pork imported from Denmark, under the laws of country of origin labelling can be labelled as made in Australia. That's because there's a lot of value-add happens here through the curing, the cooking, the slicing and the packaging, etcetera. Then there's the

ones that recognise some level of imported content such as 'Made in Australia from local and imported ingredients' - and usually every time you see that, the meat itself will be imported, if it's applied to bacon.

PIP COURTNEY: The industry's just given evidence at another country of origin labelling inquiry. But it's an area where traditionally governments have failed to regulate for clear, unambiguous guidelines.

ANDREW SPENCER: Pork in particular is one commodity that really suffers from where that legislation is today and what those claims can be. They just completely misrepresent where our product comes from.

PIP COURTNEY: While industry puts money into Bacon Week, frustrated producers say it could be done away with if country of origin labelling was clear and fair, even readable.

ANDREW JONES, PORK PRODUCER: I'm not against imports, I'm not against competition, as long as it's done on a fair playing field.

I think every consumer here has the right to know where their food is produced, how it's produced, where it was produced, before they actually purchase. They think they're buying an Australian product because they recognise the brand. And it's simply not an Australian product. It's an imported product put through there. The writing on some of that packaging is so small you can't read it. It's probably done for a reason, maybe.

PIP COURTNEY: In the meantime, producers can be reassured Bacon Week works.

Schulte's, a previous Bacon Week winner, was judged the third-best bacon in the country this year.

PETER SCHULTE: The first year when we won, we went from probably 300 kilo, 400 kilo a week to over a tonne and a half. We're doing about a tonne a week now, so we're hoping to double that in the next couple of weeks.

PIP COURTNEY: With Coles moving to stock a premium Australian bacon, it appears its rival won't be left behind, with Schulte's working on a product for Woolworths.

PETER SCHULTE: It takes us a week to cure it, then we smoke it for 24 hours. We do a semi-cold smoke so it gets cooked over a long period. We use Australian hardwood, Australian pork, we put Australian pork stickers on all our products so everyone knows it's Australian.

We're really proud of it, you know. Dad's no longer here to see it, but he'd be very proud of us 'cause it's all his recipes. He taught us how to do it, which is great.

PIP COURTNEY: In a sign the Buy Australian message is getting through, Brumby's Bakery is also trialling Schulte's bacon. With 388 stores, it would be more than a handy weekly order.

PETER SCHULTE: It's getting really hard for producers, especially with all the new laws and welfare and all the rest of it. 'Cause we got our own abattoir as well, so we're right up with all the welfare laws and all the rest of it, so it's really hard to do something and a lot of people give up, but we're not gonna.

PIP COURTNEY: Neither is the industry. It won't stop promoting the pink square or pushing more Australian smallgoods companies to use it.

ANDREW SPENCER: Some of the large smallgoods manufacturers still haven't taken up that PorkMark. Perhaps because they sell a lot of products that are made from imported ham and imported pork also. So that is one of our milestones for the future - to get the PorkMark on some of those bigger brands. But it does seem to be making a difference and I think it is helping consumers make choices to support Australian farmers more easily.

PIP COURTNEY: Because of imports, Andrew Jones increased his focus on exports. While drought and a high Australian dollar have made the market difficult, he sees Asia as insurance if Australian consumers stay wedded to eating imported bacon.

ANDREW JONES: It's now probably 10 per cent or 15 per cent.

But we'd like to keep in that market and we'd like to see it grow again in the future and we're hoping to see the China market come in at some point and we think that could be a real opportunity of niche marketing of good Aussie product.

PIP COURTNEY: Being clean and green and from Australia, will that make a difference in China given the other places they can source from?

ANDREW JONES: Absolutely. Puts us in the front row, no doubt about it.

PIP COURTNEY: Andrew Spencer says even if Bacon Week increases sales of Australian-made product, it's here to stay.

ANDREW SPENCER: We call it the chocolate of meat. There's always something to talk about with bacon. So I don't think there's any pressure on Bacon Week disappearing in the short term.

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