

CARNIVORES IN PARADISE

Spending 75 minutes in the car to buy a chop or two sounds excessive, but that's what some customers are willing to do to reach the Victor Churchill butcher shop in Sydney's fashionable Woollahra. They think nothing of an 85km return trip from places such as Palm Beach to pick up grain-fed beef, organic chicken, the roast-of-the-day or charcutier Romeo Baudouin's terrines and pâtés. James Churchill opened the shop on Queen Street in 1876; Victor Puharich (above) became the fourth owner last year. He promptly closed it for the mother of all renovations, which cost almost \$2 million. Since

reopening on August 20, business has exceeded expectations. "It's been unbelievable," says Puharich, who has worked in the meat business for 40 years. "Money is not everything in life for me any more. I did it because I wanted to have one of the best butcher shops in the world. We didn't think it would cost that much, but when you want the best quality, you blow the budget." Forget refrigerated cabinets with sprigs of plastic parsley. The interior was designed by Michael McCann, of Dreamtime Australia, and features an Italian Calacatta marble stone floor, Himalayan salt brick walls and

timber panelling. Its opulence may deter some shoppers, but Puharich says his prices are no higher than competitors in nearby suburbs. From a wholesale meat factory in Mascot, Puharich has served the finest restaurants in Sydney, Melbourne, Singapore and China. Vic's Meat supplies Qantas's first and business classes, and he's looking for suitable premises and a partner to open a shop in Melbourne. From May, Sydneysiders who can't be bothered driving can go online where Puharich will be waiting to help them select their meat.

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