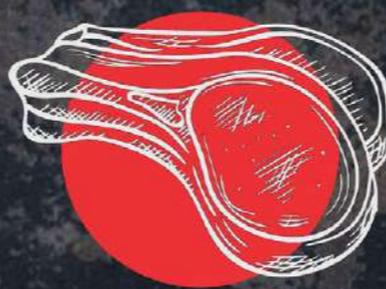


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Meaty matters

As prices continue to rise, South African consumers are showing surprising resilience. We are, after all, the braai nation, and meat forms an important part of traditional, celebratory, and staple meals across the country. However, for retailers and wholesalers, staying on top of changing market conditions, evolving consumer needs and an overall challenging environment is no easy task. An in-store butchery requires the ability to quickly adapt, innovate and constantly strive to understand their customers as time moves on.



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A global perspective

United Kingdom. According to FoodManufacture, a UK-based resource for the food manufacturing industry, local experts are expecting the meat processing industry to have both ups and downs. As challenges continue to affect the market, at a local and a global level, so too are consumers increasingly impacted by economic hardships.

Europe. In Europe, beef and pork are expected to see a decline, whereas chicken is expected to grow.

United States. In America, however, a drop in unemployment and more favourable market conditions mean retailers can expect to see growth across several meat-based sectors.



China. China is the world's largest meat consumer, with 53 million tons of pork and 10 million tons of beef and veal consumed in 2022. China's meat consumption has increased as the population has become more affluent, but due to environmental and health concerns, there is a small but growing interest in plant-based protein.

Globally, it has been a topsy turvy year in respect of animal diseases, the impact of climate change, import and export challenges, grain feed price increases and transport obstacles, power-supply crises, and higher fuel prices.



<https://www.sciencephoto.com/>



Serves: 8 - 10
Preparation time: 20 minutes plus 30 minutes marinating
Cooking time: 25 minutes

GOLDI, COUNTY FAIR, FESTIVE or MOUNTAIN VALLEY

INGREDIENTS

Chicken:

250ml atchar, blended
1kg Chicken Kebabs/Breast Fillets
or Thighs (Deboned)
30ml oil

Umfino:

500ml water
400g maize meal
1tsp salt
200g spinach or umbayu

ATCHA MARINATED CHICKEN KEBABS WITH UMFINO

More than just a condiment, this atcha marinade imparts sweet and spicy notes onto the chicken

Method:

Blend the atcha to a paste, if you do not have a blender use a pestle and mortar to grind atcha. Remove kebabs from packaging, transfer to a baking tray and pat dry. Add your atcha marinade to the kebabs, use your hands to spread marinade all over the chicken. Let marinade for up to 2 hours but no less than 30 minutes. While the chicken is marinating, prepare the Umfino.

In a medium pot, bring water and salt to a boil.

Once boiling, reduce heat and slowly whisk in the maize meal. Add your spinach or umbayu cover and cook for 20 - 25 minutes.

To cook kebabs, place over medium heat coals, cook for 10 - 15 minutes, rotating frequently (every 4 minutes) to prevent drying out. If you have marinade left over in the tray you can marinate the kebabs

Tip: you want to cook your meat over coals that have gone greyish black with tinge glows in the centre in the centre. Serve your kebabs on top of your umfino.



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Serves: 6
Preparation time: 10 minutes plus 2 hours marinating
Cooking time: 30 minutes

GOLDI, COUNTY FAIR, FESTIVE or MOUNTAIN VALLEY Whole Bird

INGREDIENTS

Chicken:

1 Lemon, zested and sliced
1 Tbsp Herbs
30 ml oil

Classic Green Bean Salad

A handful of green beans
30ml oil
15ml lemon juice or vinegar
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt
1 Tin baked beans
250ml butter beans, cooked

LEMON AND HERB CHICKEN FLATTIE WITH A CHARRED GREEN BEAN SALAD

This is a great technique for braaing chicken in half the time.

Method:

Turn chicken upside down (breasts facing down) with the legs facing towards you. Using sharp scissors cut down either side of the 'pope's nose'. Flip the chicken over and flatten it down with both hands. Zest or grate the lemon skin.

Add lemon zest, herbs and two tablespoons of oil to a bowl and mix to form a paste. Pat chicken dry and place the herb and zest mixture under and over the chicken skin. Gentle salt the chicken skin and place a few lemon slices along the breast. Over medium coals cook the chicken bone side first for 40 - 45 minutes flipping after 30 minutes. Arrange the coals around the chicken so that it cooks via indirect heat not burning the skin before cooking the chicken.

To make the bean salad, on the fire cook your green beans till vibrant green and slightly charred, about 5 minutes. Mix oil, vinegar, salt and sugar until sugar and salt has dissolved. Combine baked beans, with liquid, butter beans and charred green beans. Drizzle with dressing and serve alongside chicken flattie.

Tip: Use the cut off spine for making stock.



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Traditional South African Skilpadjies. Image Irene Muller

The South African meat market

The challenges South Africa is facing are no different and as local consumers know all too well, load-shedding, adverse weather, the rising cost of grain, and disease outbreaks have all impacted the cost of meat. The price of feed, such as grain and soybeans, remains high due to import supply constraints and unfavourable growing conditions.

“For those on the breadline, many animal-based proteins are falling out of reach and lower-income consumers are looking for affordable meat options or other alternatives to meet their protein needs and feed their families.”

It’s not all bad news, however, as many South Africans are proving surprisingly resilient and reluctant to give up all meat. Statista.com reports that SA revenue in the meat market is expected to amount to R86.31 million (US\$4.58 million) in 2023. The market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 9.32% between

2023 and 2028 while, volume is expected to exceed 800 million kg by 2028.

Business Tech on 23 May 2023 [Luke Fraser] reports that, “The Household Affordability Index for May by the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice & Dignity group (PMBEJD) shows that food prices still remain high in the country – but meat prices are starting to turn.” Roelie van Reenen, supply chain executive at Beefmaster Group, warned that despite this turn, price pressure is likely to stick around for longer due to other factors at play, and that any significant reduction in price is unlikely to reach the consumer any time soon.

Van Reenen says, “Increasingly, consumers have less money to spend. With financial budgets under pressure, they are making significant trade-offs in their shopping choices. This is impacting the agricultural and beef value chains.”

Van Reenen adds that producers are operating under extremely difficult circumstances, and the situation will likely remain challenging for the remainder of the year. He says ...

“I anticipate at least six to eight months of tough times ahead. However, we must remain optimistic and focus on producing cheaper, smarter, and more market-oriented products to protect our industry.”



Image: iriworldwide.com

Image: <https://www.foodmanufacture.co.uk/>



In a report for IOL, Dominic Naidoo writes that despite overall higher costs, and while plant-based meat substitutes are growing at 6.5% per annum, South Africa still remains a meat-eating nation, ranking 9th overall in global per capita consumption of beef in 2022. However, ethical considerations are increasingly influencing meat choices, as consumers want to know the origins of their meat purchases.

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The Agri News Net Farming Portal reports that poultry will start making inroads into the beef and other meat markets. The report says, “The expected increase in chicken meat consumption is being driven by the increasing price of other proteins, like beef and lamb. In the wake of this, consumers will divert their attention to chicken to meet their protein needs. The increasing prices of beef and lamb are expected to increase the consumption of chicken meat to higher levels. Chicken is by far the most popular meat in South Africa. It is more affordable compared to other meats, which may push middle-class consumers towards this protein source.”

The report goes on to note that, “Although pork can compete with chicken in terms of affordability, it is not consumed by a large part of the population for religious reasons. Traditionally, pork has been consumed by more affluent consumers in South Africa, with a substantial share in processed form. A significant share of pork consumption is attributed to the food service sector with sales of ribs and bacon.”

When it comes to buyer behaviour, the main drivers for consumers are culture, social norms, nutrition, price and convenience. Other factors ...

- Looking beyond your typical beef, pork, or lamb ranges is also worth considering, as game meats, ostrich, and venison grow in popularity.
- Pack and portion sizes continue to be important factors in purchase decisions – whether this be bulk buys, single portions, or family-size options.
- Cheaper, budget-friendly cuts are also a main staple for millions of South Africans.



- With coal and gas braais both popular choices, the accompanying tools and accessories, from braai tongs, potjie pots, and rib racks to coal and firelighters are a must-have for any good in-store butchery.

The South African braai

Whether they call it a braai or a Shisa Nyama, South Africans are deeply committed to this national pastime. Part of most celebrations, sporting events, weekend socialising, family get-togethers and regular meals, the braai is part and parcel of South African culture. For retail and wholesale in-store butcheries and meat counters, catering for the braai is a must.

- Braai accessories and accompaniments are an integral part of butchery and braai – with cost, quality, innovation, and novelty value all playing their part.
- Marinades, condiments, sauces, spices, and other flavour enhancers form part of the pre-braai preparation.
- Salt rocks, wood chips for smoking meats, and even table-top rotisseries or smokers have serious novelty drawing power for at-home cooks and aspiring braai masters.

Convenience plays an important role for the braai. Providing spiced, seasoned and marinated ready-to-braai alternatives will give your customers convenient choices, with accompaniments such as garlic bread, and biltong and droewors for snacks. However, retailers and wholesalers should keep in mind that a variety of price points is necessary to cater for different consumers. Younger consumers are looking for more experiences, bolder flavours, and interesting twists on old favourites. Shaking up your braai offerings and investing in some innovation and product development will pay off.

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Factors driving consumer behaviour

For many consumers, promotional pricing is more important than ever before when making a meat purchase. Conversely, certain consumers are willing to pay more for ethical, sustainable, and environmentally friendly products. Religious requirements are also a driving factor for a large number of consumers.

Innovative in-store butcheries become destination shopping points when the range is endearing to the customer base, and they can find good promotions on quality products. Cleanliness and hygiene, customer-centric services, and an attractive display are critical to this department. Targeted, personalised communication regarding sales, promotions, and vouchers is effective when used correctly, but most research notes that a dynamic, informative, and interactive use of social media platforms is equally if not more effective. On the other hand, older generations still rely on physical adverts to determine where the best deals can be had. This means a multi-channel approach is a must.

Today's consumer is more likely to shop around for price, quality, or experience and is less likely to stay loyal to specific brands or retailers. This means timeous, relevant, effective communication is the lifeblood of any retailer or wholesaler looking to attract and retain customers. Building your brand equity means offering the best bang for your customer's buck, ensuring convenience is always a priority, and upholding a reputation for quality, honesty, and integrity.



Master Butcher Dorothy Labuschagne is based in the butchery training department at Checkers Hyper Edenvale, Gauteng. She joined the Shoprite Group 28 years ago gaining extensive knowledge and expertise in the meat industry over the years.

Shoprite Group gives retailers a masterclass in Master Butchers

The Shoprite Group recently announced an African first when 62 butchery managers and trainers – including 13 women – joined the global club of certified Master Butchers after graduating from the Shoprite Group's Master Meat Artisan Programme.

This is the only highly specialised butchery learning programme on the continent and it is underwritten by the United Kingdom's Institute of Meat. According to the Group's release it provides participants with extensive knowledge in meat processing practices from farm to fork. To qualify, "Butchers are required to build a substantial portfolio of evidence that includes modules on butchery expertise, food hygiene and safety, and business acumen, among others."



Elizabeth Moloi from Alberton in Gauteng graduated from the Group's Master Meat Artisan Programme in July 2023 and says she that seeing a skilled blockman cutting primal meat cuts into retail cuts years ago drew her into the industry.



Lydia Thithi, master butcher from Shoprite Boitumelo, Welkom in the Free State. Lydia joined Shoprite Boitumelo Junction in 2011 through the Group's Meat Market learnership programme. She held various positions before being promoted to Meat Market Manager.

The Group also announced that it expects to enrol approximately 150 more qualifying butchery managers over the next five years, providing scarce and sought-after butchery skills and ensuring

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the Group's Meat Market employees can access sustainable career path opportunities.

Johan Hunter, General Manager of Shoprite's Meat Markets says ...

“ The fact that this programme requires ten years' experience, with at least five as a Meat Market manager, just to enrol, reflects our commitment to supporting our butchers on their long-term vocational journeys, equipping them with the necessary tools and knowledge to excel in the butchery profession. ”



Image courtesy of <https://www.choice.com.au/>

Braai, butchery, and meat-based trends

Meat alternatives

It may seem counter-intuitive for in-store butcheries and meat counters to stock meat alternatives, but there is method to the madness. According to the Butcher's Trends 2023 Report, most meat alternative purchases were made by meat eaters looking to diversify their protein



Image courtesy of Malidate-van, Pexels

intake. Meat eaters will also purchase non-meat options for friends and family who prefer these alternatives. Meat eaters with a taste for adventure and those looking to make increasingly sustainable choices are also interested in high-quality, great tasting meat alternatives, so it makes sense for retailers to make this easy for them. Interestingly, this included plant-based as well as lab-grown meat alternatives, with the younger generation proving far more inclined to try lab-grown meats than their older counterparts.



Convenience

Convenience at the butchery comes in many forms. At-home cooks confident in their skills are looking for premium cuts and ingredients that remove some of the more arduous or time-consuming steps of meal preparation. This can include pre-marinated meats, deboned and pre-cut options, bone-in portioned pieces, and partially cooked meats.

For those with a bare-minimum of time on their hands, added-value products such as easy-cook meals and convenience combos are highly attractive options. Snacking falls into this category too, as many shoppers – in particular millennials and Gen Z – are snacking more frequently and either skipping or replacing meals with snacks. Healthy high-protein offerings should be a butchery staple.



Image courtesy of <https://www.thepioneerwoman.com/>



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Sustainable, ethical and humane

Consumers are looking to make choices that are better for them, better for their families, and better for the environment. This means free-range pasture-raised meat that is free from routine antibiotics, that was slaughtered humanely, and which is packaged in eco-friendly materials. These consumers expect to know the provenance of their meat and respond well to transparency and ‘farm-to-fork’ narratives that allow them to make more informed decisions.

Value for money

Much like convenience, this can take many forms depending on the consumer and the economic pressures they may be facing. For some, value for money means getting the best deals on prime cuts, perhaps limiting their meat

consumption slightly but without compromising on quality. For others, value for money comes from promotional activities, economic savings, and perhaps choosing cheaper cuts or a different protein in order to stretch the budget as far as possible - while still achieving balanced, nutritious, and healthy meals.

E-commerce

Online shopping and delivery or in-store pick up is a convenient easy shopping method that is increasingly favoured by consumers looking to reduce their time spent in-store, avoid the pitfalls of impulse buying, and maximise efficiency during the day. A user-friendly, well-designed and built e-commerce site with reliable delivery times and a good selection of stock is absolutely crucial to online success.

A word of caution: out of stocks are as annoying and off-putting online as they are in-store. It’s an area that could do with some improvement, based on anecdotal evidence. Shoppers planning a braai who can’t get the meat product or vegetable accompaniment advertised on your site are not going to be happy.

Value adds

Offering prepared dishes, easy-cook meals, pre-cooked deli options, and family-friendly ranges are all butchery value-adds that attract shoppers and influence purchase decisions. In addition to this, retailers can add even more value with information on different cuts of meat and how to prepare and cook them, advice regarding protein sources and choices, recipes, and cutting, slicing,

and trimming services. Snapscan and online recipes are easy to access and easy to update.

Something as simple as offering bulk as well as single-serving portions, or offering Halaal or Kosher meat, can be the deciding factor when it comes to making a purchase or not. **SR**



Sources:

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Ann Baker-Keulemans writes on topics related to business, lifestyle, technology, and health, with extensive knowledge on the SA retail and wholesale landscape. Contact annbk@wilkinsross.co.za | www.wilkinsrossglobal.com

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