

Polidori - a taste of Old North Denver

Contributed by
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It takes four people about an hour to make 2,000 pounds of Italian sausage. But it has taken 4 generations of Polidori's to turn a neighborhood grocery into a sausage shop, and from there into a well-known Denver institution. The sausage-maker of choice for area businesses like Simple Foods, Pizza Alley and Heidi's, Polidori also ships palettes of sausage to national conglomerates like King Soopers and Le Peep.

Founded in 1925 as Polidori's Grocery and Meat Market, Anna Polidori first brought an old Italian family sausage recipe to North Denver in 1925. Louis Polidori, her son, and the second owner of the Polidori business, recalls the story of how the sausage business began:

"When you walked into the shop, the door went right into the meat market. My mother had decided to make some sausage that day - it was in August, August 16. 'My god,' people said, 'what are you making. It's so good - will you make me some?'"

Thus, a North Denver tradition was born. Since then, Polidori has been continuously family run - and now Steve and Melodie Polidori are the fourth generation of owners, though Louis still comes into the plant almost daily to see that things are being done in accordance with the family heritage.

"I never tell 'em what to do," says Louis. "That's a mistake. Since they took over five years ago, they're doing ten times the business we did then. They're doing something I forgot."

"But he just asks a lot of questions," laughs Melodie. "The business had been built entirely by word of mouth - it was his hobby. We really hadn't been doing any marketing. There's a lot of family pride - and it's tough, as you grow, and that comes with employees and employee problems. But we still make a fresh, natural product day after day after day, to grandma's recipe."

The pork in Polidori sausage comes from no bone picks - most of the meat is from shoulder cuts, and no trim is ever used. All of Polidori's products are made with the finest cuts of pork and a carefully selected blend of spices. While most Italian sausage is deeply red in color, this redness is created by the addition of paprika, a trend that started late in the 20th century to make sausage look more appetizing. Polidori prides itself on the fact that their products contain no MSG, no added colors or preservatives, and no such gimmicks - and, thanks to the quality of the meat that is used, are among the healthiest sausages in terms of fat and cholesterol.

Housed in the meat processing plant behind the old Coors mansion at 33rd and Tejon, the nondescript building can't really serve as a storefront - though, if you frequent any of Denver's older, award-winning pizza joints, you've probably enjoyed this North Denver favorite many times. Hailed as one of North Denver's best exports not just by the local Italian community and papers like *Andiamo*, but also by sausage connoisseurs like the Denver Fire Department's Chief Trujillo, Polidori sausage is a true example of a local product that has found wide currency, and makes proprietary sausage recipes for a number of restaurants in town.

In addition to Italian sausage, Polidori offers all pork Chorizo, multiple pork sausages, and heirloom meatballs.

Their Italian Sausage and Chorizo are now available to the general public through Simple Foods, and at many King Soopers stores - or, you can stop by their booth at this upcoming weekend's Italian Festival at Belmar (September 15 and 16), meet a real-life Polidori, and try out this North Denver tradition yourself.