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# The Meat Market

Four generations of Denver sausage makers keep the hot links coming.

BY CHRISTINE DELL'AMORE

**DONNING HAIRNETS** and standing next to a 200 pound vat of ground beef, Steve and Melodie Polidori debate their great-grandmother's ancestry. Melodie seems convinced the Italian-born matriarch, Anna, came here from Sicily. Steve says it's Rome. "Why else do you think the Coliseum is on our logo?" he chides Melodie. For the next couple minutes a friendly debate ensues between the two, ultimately proving that, even in your late 30s, you never outgrow sibling rivalry.

Brother and sister laugh it off and get back to more important things: keeping the family's meat-processing company running smoothly. This year Polidori Meat Processors Inc. celebrates its 80th anniversary in the Mile-High City, and Steve and Melodie, fourth-generation Denver sausage barons, are keeping their great-grandmother's vision—and Italian sausage recipe—alive and well.

From a tiny building on Tejon Street (the carriage house of a former Coors mansion) the Polidoris and seven employees produce 2,000 pounds of meat products every day. Inside the production room, savory fennel, paprika, and chile powder tantalize the senses so much that you almost forget you're in a sausage factory.

That is, until they kick the enormous "sausage stuffer" into high gear. The machine churns out sausage most of the day. It has to; Polidori products are in high demand here in Denver. The Original Pancake House serves the breakfast links, Pasquini's Pizzeria and Carmine's on Penn showcase the Italian sausage, and Cuba Cuba dishes up the diced pork. Grocery shoppers can find Polidori meats (look for the Coliseum logo) at City Market and King Soopers.

The Italian sausage recipe is the same one Anna Polidori's family used in Rome (or Sicily, take your pick). "We'd tell you the recipe," deadpans Melodie, "but then we'd have to kill you." What she does say is that the sausage has a "perfect spice profile"—one that's withstood the test of generations. What's more, the stuff is fresh, never frozen, and sometimes hand-delivered by Steve and Melodie themselves. Enrique Socarras, head chef at



**SAUSAGE SIBLINGS** Bro/sis duo Steve and Melodie Polidori took over the family business from their octogenarian grandfather, who'd been running the business since the '40s.

Cuba Cuba, says he uses them primarily for the customer service.

Three years ago, Melodie and Steve took over the biz from their grandfather, Louis, who formally retired at the age of 85 as Denver's reigning sausage king. In the 1940s, he and his brother took over what was then the family grocery store and honed the meat-processing portion of the business.

Today Louis still has a desk at the company headquarters—a yellowing photograph of the late Anna hangs on the wall and his archaic check writer rests next to a stack of papers. He comes around now and again to survey how the business is going. And although, according to Melodie, he's not "overly suscep-

tible to change," he's still pleased with what the two are doing.

At the desk across the office, Steve sits with his computer. Upon taking over the company, he digitized Polidori and launched it into the 21st century. Coupled with Melodie's marketing push, they've seen sales increase by 20 percent in two years—a level of production that just might keep them around another 80 years. Which, of course, is the most important thing for the Polidoris. "It's all about the family," says Melodie. "Someday we'll want our kids to run the company, too."

*For more information about Polidori Sausage or to place an order, call 303-455-5701.*