

LIKE NANA MADE

By **KATHLEEN EDGEComb**
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HEALTH-CONSCIOUS Californians, who live in a land where the best fat is no fat and exercise is like a second job, are regularly calling a Westerly deli and ordering dry-cured meats. Sticks of abruze, cacciatore, capicola and soppressata, (the latter is affectionately known as "soupy"), are leaving Fortuna's Deli weekly and appearing on hors d'oeuvre trays on the West Coast.

Paul Stannard, who owns the deli, restaurant and catering business with his wife, Patti, has shipped thousands of pounds of dry-cured meats since August when an article appeared in the Los Angeles Times praising the flavor of the sausages and explaining the Stannards' old-world methods for making the dry-cured meats.

"Christmas is usually the biggest time, but we've had repeat business already," said Stannard, who began shipping him meats by Parcel Post about 18 months ago as a convenience for his regular customers.

Stannard went from selling 200 pounds of dry-cured sausages a week to 800 pounds a week — about 800 sticks. The mail orders make up about one-third of his business.

There are no nitrates in his meats. The only preservative he uses is salt. But he has figured a way to recreate the exact winter temperatures and conditions needed to cure the meat year-round. He makes it weekly in the crowded kitchen in the Franklin Street restaurant and has 4,000 sticks hanging at another location where he has built a special curing room.

"What's happening here, I think," Stannard said, "is it's something people used to be able to have years ago and now it's really hard to find. The trend is people are going back to old values."



■ Paul and Patti Stannard are the owners of Fortuna's Deli in Westerly.

He said at the beginning of the summer, he received a call from a Kathie Jenkins who ordered about \$50 worth of meats, saying a friend had told her about his dry-cured sausages. She asked that a shipment be sent to a Los Angeles address.

Six weeks later the phones in the deli and restaurant on Franklin Street began

ringing early. By 10 a.m., Stannard had taken four orders that were destined for the West Coast.

Finally, when the secretary to the mayor of Long Beach, Calif., called to place an order, Stannard broke down and asked how she knew about his store. The mayor's secretary cited the L.A. Times story and faxed Stannard a copy.

"She never talked to us," Stannard said of Ms. Jenkins. "I guess people really trust her judgment." He said she must have taken information from a two-page explanation on "Our Own Dry-Cured Sausages" included with every order.

Ms. Jenkins, a food writer for the L.A. Times, highly recommended the "dense, flavorful sausages" in an Aug. 13 article under the heading "America's Best."

"Paul Stannard makes his dense, flavorful sausages in much the way other people make wine: by hand, in small batches, using only the very best ingredients," she said. "And like fine wine, he ages his product slowly, dry-curing it."

"It's a dying art. Not many people do it this way," Stannard said of the traditional pork-based sausages that Italian families still make once a year and cure in their basements for four months. "I think people are nostalgic and want their soupy the way 'nana' and 'papa' used to make it. We are still making it the way the Romans did 2,000 years ago."

According to a history of dry-cured sausage that Stannard wrote for The Rhode Island Gourmet Guide, dry-cured sausage was created in about 500 B.C. when salt was used as a preservative. Romans perfected the process and passed their secret methods of cutting, grinding, mixing and seasoning to apprentice sausage-makers.

When Italian immigrants came to Rhode Island around the turn of the century, they

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