The 2010 Queensland Sausage King competition at Ekka on Sunday 8 August judged the best 42 snags from a field of more than 800 entries that competed this year in regional competitions all over the state. Run by the Australian Meat Industry Council as part of the Royal Queensland Food & Wine Show, sausages were judged in six classes: Traditional Australian, Traditional Australian Pork, Poultry, Australian Lamb/Open Class, Continental, and Gourmet/Open Class.

The competition takes the top six snags from seven regions: North and South Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Hinterland, Sunshine Coast and Burnett, Capricorn and Tropical Regions, and the Outback, and sends the winners to the National Titles – Tasmania, 2011. Queensland took home three National titles at the National Sausage King competition in February this year on the Gold Coast.

The Sausage King competition is strongly supported by the AMIC, the meat industry who supply ingredients and equipment, and the butchers themselves who travelled from all over the state to attend the finals - who see this as serious business, with sales and reputations at stake.

Gail Butler from the AMIC is one of the driving forces behind the competition, “The Sausage King competition represents a remarkable journey for our sausage manufacturers. It started off 12 years ago as butchers talking in a country town, and just got bigger. Now it's amazing how many independent butchers have taken to it...they put flavours into sausages I never thought you could – it’s fantastic”.

For the regional finals, the same team of judges travels the state to ensure consistent results, headed by long-term chief judge Alan Rowan, who recons a good sausage “…uses fresh products, is made with good equipment, and is properly mixed with seasoning or flavorings.”

The meat the sausages for the competition contain must be 100% as labeled. Next, they are judged on appearance, cut open to see if they have been evenly mixed, and when cooked they must not shrink or break apart. Finally, an individual snag is sliced up for tasting by the panel of three judges, all drawn from industry sponsors.

Errol Rees of Kerry Ingredients was the expert cook who kept the snags turning all day, “The important thing is to cook them slowly on medium heat. If you put a cold sausage onto a hot surface they may expand and break. They must be turned regularly and evenly. You don't want to prick them to release liquid, as it is that fat and water that carries the flavour of the meat.”

Local culinary identity Peter Howard MC’d the Sausage King state final, “Now it is an artform, when you look at the sausages being made by our butchers....and independent butchers must have that integrity if their customers are going to keep coming back...by supporting these butchers you are supporting agricultural excellence.”

Alison Alexander, broadcaster and foodie turned out three fabulous dishes featuring premium sausages for the audience to taste as the judging took place, passing on great ideas for meals that are easy to prepare, nutritious and delicious.
The winners:

Beef – Trinity Beach Quality Meats, Trinity Beach (north of Cairns)
Pork – Zac’s Meats, Bundaberg
Lamb - Kingwood Park Butchery, Gold Coast, for their “Lamb, Feta & Shallots”
Continental – Circle T Meats, Raceview, Ipswich, for their “Spanish Chorizo”
Gourmet – Terry Orreals Quality Meats, Brendale, Brisbane, for their “Beef Curry & Onion”
Poultry - Allora Butchery, Allora (north of Warwick) for their “Chicken, Cheese and Chives”

Trinity Beach Quality Meats owner Russell Perkins said of his 1st place in the Beef Sausage section: “I’m rapt! The way I make them was as good as I could, so if we didn’t win, it doesn’t matter, but I’ll be putting an ad in the paper tomorrow!”

The 2010 RQF&WS combines the Branded Beef Competition, the Royal Queensland Wine Show, the Dairy Produce Show and the Olive Oil Show with all new awards this year for Branded Lamb, table olives, infused/flavoured oil, beer of all kinds and premium sausages in a series of themed competitions from May to October this year.

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