

## It's local first at Valley Custom Cutting of Smiths Falls, the first of its kind in region

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The local food market has cause to celebrate with the opening of Valley Custom Cutting (VCC), filling an important gap created by the closure of Rideau Meats earlier this year. Located at 159 Lombard St., Smiths Falls, owners Angie and Dan Hoysted are hoping to step into that gap and help local customers and producers in the process.

Both Angie and Dan are hard workers with a variety of experiences under their belts. Dan has been working in the food and beverage industry his whole working life, with six to seven years spent working as a full time meat cutter along with experience working as the head butcher at Rideau Meats prior to its closure. Angie is a designer by trade and a foreman at the Gallipeau Centre.

"All our experience has led us to create this business," Dan explained. "It's the culmination of everything we've ever done."

That culmination of experience has placed them in a good position from a business standpoint. With a niche to fill in an already existing market, coupled with Dan's connections and relationship with local producers, the launch of VCC is on solid footing.

VCC is the first of its kind in the region, operating as a free-standing meat plant, and processing meat sent their way from abattoirs around the area. VCC will operate as a butcher shop, cutting room and smokehouse. The uniqueness of their operation is in part due to the local element, but also because of the capacity they will offer customers, Angie explained.

"Our main focus is processing, we're going to be able to handle a lot of meat," Angie said.

The 3,000 square foot processing room will receive meat from local abattoirs, which will then be cut and frozen on site. Wallace Beef in Kingston, and Mr. Beef in Pakenham, will ship carcasses to VCC, where they will be custom-cut based on the customer's cutting instructions. Angie explained they are also looking to have pork shipped from Reiches and Lynch's, and will be either hiring a refrigerated truck for that purposes, or purchasing one of their own.

Because of the uniqueness of their business model, Angie and Dan have invested in a high-end scale labelling system that will allow individualized labels for meat packaging. This labelling system will allow local farmers to add their own farm logo and contact information to each label, to identify what farm the meat comes from. This is one of many individualized services VCC offers to producers.

"Custom is the point...custom service and honesty is the entire point of this operation," Dan said.

For customers looking to purchase meat, VCC offers a wide range of selections, with everything from ground beef to ribeye, T-bone or sirloin steaks, not to mention pork and chicken.

Local first will be the focus of the meat they sell, and they will source meat locally first, then from Ontario, and then Canada.

"If we can't source a product from within Canada, we won't source it at all," Dan said. "There are many cheaper options from further away but the more we can source locally, the more we strengthen small communities."

Angie will be working in the 1,000 square foot store-front, and they have even prepared a room for their two children to spend time in, and noted they've spent a lot of time on the planning stages for their business. Angie said they started planning last year, but when Dan lost his job with the closure of Rideau Meats in February, "everything went full steam ahead."

The Hoysteds received a grant from the Eastern Ontario Development Program, administered by Valley Heartland, that assisted with some of the equipment costs. The location was an easy selection, Angie said, admitting the Lombard Street location was the only location they'd ever considered.

Both Dan and Angie said they have been overwhelmed by the support they've received from local producers and members of the community. While Angie's focus will be on the storefront, and customers purchasing meat, Dan's focus will be on satisfying the needs of their local suppliers.

"I want to be able to provide them with an end product that represents the amount of effort they've put into creating it," Dan explained.



Angie and Dan Hoysted stand behind the counter of the recently opened Valley Custom Cutting, on Lombard Street. Valley Custom Cutting offers a butcher shop, featuring premium, locally grown meats, a cutting room and smokehouse.

VCC will be open Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. They will be closed Monday.