

European fine meats

Aufwiedersehen to Quinte's meat meister

By CHRIS MALETTE
Staff Reporter

Quinte is losing its wizard of wurst. After seven years of producing the supreme German sausage and meats, Horst Balthes is closing European Fine Meats and moving to Vancouver. Balthes came to Belleville in 1982 from the village of Ediger, near Frankfurt, where he and wife, Gathe, operated a restaurant and butcher shop. Shortly after arriving in Belleville,

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Balthes quickly established a reputation for his bratwurst, cheese grillers, cold meats and hams. The taste of his products bore the distinctive flavor of 20 generations of Balthes family tradition in the "wurst-maching" game. "We owe a very big thanks to our customers," says Gathe. "We want to thank them and tell them we hate to leave many of them. They have been very good to us." Indeed, some customers, upon learning their favorite German butcher was pulling up stakes, were so disap-

pointed at the news they wept. "We actually had people in the store crying when they heard we were leaving," said Horst. The Balthes family starts anew in Vancouver in September when Horst takes his new job with Intercontinental Meats, the largest meat packer on the west coast. No more cutting, chopping and mixing meats for Balthes, however, as he's taken on a consultant's position with the packer. The name European Fine Meats

will carry on, however, in Gananoque, where a woman has purchased Balthes' equipment and the recipes to the firm's prized meats. "She will be bringing in a German sausage maker who's semi-retired to help. We hope she can continue to supply the Kingston delis and meat shops who carried out products in the past." The Balthes this week praised former Prince Edward-Hastings MP Jack Ellis for helping them establish in Quinte. "Jack Ellis was the man who pushed as much as he could for our papers to come over and to help us get going here," said Horst. "We cannot thank him enough." The couple will miss Quinte, as will their children Thorsten, 18, and Daniela, 8, but won't shed a tear for the change in pace they'll enjoy in Vancouver. In the truest tradition of a "mom and pop" business, Gathe worked five days each week behind the retail meat counter while Horst carved out his reputation in the meat processing shop at the back of their Dundas Street business. The couple toiled long hours, retiring each night to their apartment above the store only to begin work at dawn the next morning. Many nights, when Horst had large orders for special functions to fill, you could find the burly butcher at work in his shop until the wee hours of the morning. "It wasn't a big operation — it was as big as we could make it," said Horst. "I was the only one working out back and we did what we could." Summer barbecues in Quinte will lose a distinctive German flavor as the Balthes family sold the last of its wonderful wursts this week.