

Hampshire farmers David and Judy Janaway and their forebears have been rearing livestock for many generations. So, when their son and daughter Rob and Emma, and their respective spouses, Abby and lan, persuaded them to develop a shop on the farm, the family didn't take long to decide that the Hereford breed should be at the heart of this retail venture.

"The Hereford seemed to tick all of the boxes," says Rob. "We felt it was the most recognised name of all the beef breeds to put through the shop and using a native breed was also important to us. It had many characteristics that fitted our system well and at the end of the day, would produce good eating quality from low quality forage."

A particular requirement was for the cattle to provide a regular, year-round throughput of beef, supplying at least two carcasses every week. These not only needed to be relatively small, at around 320 to 380kg which would supply the smaller joints required by the modern consumer, but should ideally achieve the elusive, yet soughtafter combination of high retail value with good economy of production.

"We have used continentals in the past," says Rob. "But the Limousins we had were too wild and we had calving difficulties with the Charolais.

"We have since found that the modern Hereford

has been significantly improved, with growth rates almost equal to the Charolais and they are definitely cheaper and quicker to finish."

Today, the suckler herd comprises 250 head and carries the vestiges of the continental bloodlines, but is steadily becoming totally native. Mixed breed suckler cows are served by either the Hereford (largely originating from Robert Wilson's Kelso herd at Cowbog in Scotland) or Shorthorn stock bulls, and the best of the female progeny are retained as herd replacements.

"We decided to start producing our own replacements because the standard cow was almost always a dairy cross, and carried more and more Holstein blood - which is just what we didn't want," says Rob.

The resulting home-bred cow is said to be both docile and cheap to maintain; she often overwinters on kale or heathland without losing condition; and she frequently calves outside, almost always with no intervention.

Meanwhile, with year-round calving, her progeny will typically come indoors to finish at 18-24

It's recently been awarded **Britain's Best** Local Food Retailer in the prestigious 'Rural Oscars' run by the Countryside **Alliance** and has a string of other successes to its credit. Ann Hardy went to the shop in Hampshire to find out why the Hereford breed is at the heart of its success.







months; go for slaughter at 19-30 months; and produce a carcase grade of R4H. Importantly, they can also be cheaply held back to finish as demand dictates, maintaining the business's throughput during every week of the year.

It is this constant throughput which is at the heart of the farm shop's success, allowing an impressive 88 percent of everything sold to originate on the farm.

"There have been times when we would have made more money by buying in our meat, but we won't go down that route, as it's important that our customers know it's ours," says Judy.

To this end, a new policy of identifying any of the farm's home-produced items with a clearly marked label is now in place.

The Newlyns Farm Shop itself (named after Judy's family farm and intended to be neutral and all-inclusive for every family member, whatever their surname) has been an unequivocal triumph in every way since it was opened in 2004.

Voted Hampshire's Best Meat Supplier and Best Farm Shop in 2005; winner of 10 gold awards at the Great Hampshire

Sausage and Pie Competition in 2007; Hampshire's Best Farm Shop and Best Local Food Retailer in 2008 and 2009 respectively; it is perhaps the most recent award, as Britain's Best Local Food Retailer in the prestigious 'Rural Oscars' run by the Countryside Alliance, which tops the list.

A visit to the shop will corroborate all you'd expect from the string of awards. The senses feast on displays in every direction, from the traditional meat, veg, dairy and delicatessen counters to the biscuits, bread, and more unexpected, bank after bank of home-produced ready-meals. Meanwhile, aromas from the coffee shop and the cookery school on the mezzanine floor above, permeate the atmosphere, leaving every passing customer salivating for food.

And the customers come in their droves. So much so, that the turnover has increased by 20 per cent every year since the business was opened, the shop has twice been expanded to accommodate new ventures, and the footfall is growing year by year.

And that's exactly the point, according to Abby, one of the visionaries behind the business. "We have always wanted this to be an everyday shop and not just for luxuries.

"We want a high footfall which we hope to achieve by offering great quality food and being competitive on price - and we would always be competitive with any other butcher or a supermarket like Waitrose."

The enterprise began soon after a larger mixed family farm had been split and David, Judy and their family had taken over the livestock side of the business, which now extends to 750 acres.

With all of the meat going to the abattoir at that time, the family were keen to retain a bigger proportion of profits and the younger generation of Rob, Emma, Abby and lan – all still in their late 20s at the time – were the driving force behind the shop.

Recognising the strength of their location in an affluent area in the village of North Warnborough, close to Hook



and junction five of the M3 and with immediate access to a busy A road – they knew this gave them a head-start.

"We wouldn't have done it if we hadn't had such a good site," says Rob. "We knew this location had a good chance of working."

Also insisting that you have to be prepared to invest, he says: "Lots of farm shops aren't prepared to do this so they are doomed from the start."

Building the shop from scratch in the style of a traditional Hampshire barn, the family and staff all pulled together to get the original building in place in just over two months.

"We started at the end of January 2004 and opened the shop on 5 April – a week before Easter," recalls Rob. "We'd always made up our minds that was when we wanted to open and although the hanging and cutting rooms weren't quite ready, the butcher managed by cutting the meat in the chiller when we first started.

"I always think it's better to set hard targets," he adds.

Meat is clearly the mainstay of the Janaways' business and the foundation on which it was built. The butchers' display is the most striking focal point of the shop and is watched over by the benevolent eye of a Hereford bull, which takes pride of place on the wall art above the counter. Financially too it represents by far the greatest contribution to sales at around 60 per cent of their value.

A variety of species supply the meat counter, and as well as the beef, there's lamb from 850 ewes, pork from 250 sows, 1,200 chickens, 1,000 turkeys and 130 geese for Christmas - all sourced from the family's own farm.

It is Abby's job to add value to the meat which she began when the shop first opened with an innovative range of ready-meals.

"One of the main objectives is to use the whole carcase which we have always managed to achieve," she says. "For example, at Christmas when everyone wants a rib of beef, we would make cottage pie or lasagne."

Such has been the success of the Newlyns home-produced ready-meal range that it is one of the main reasons for the shop's first expansion just 18 months after it opened. Today it is the second largest earner, accounting for some 30 per cent of the takings.

"We're not pitching the meals at just the top end of the market," says Abby. "We're selling at reasonable prices for large portions which are very much homecooked by our in-house chef."

Indeed, so successful has been the 'home cooking' that on many occasions the family have gone to dinner parties and been served a meal they have cooked themselves!

"It's usually something like beef bourguignon or chicken minervois or often one of our puddings like the raspberry roulade," says Abby.

It could equally be the beef olives (stuffed with pork, beer and watercress sausagemeat and topped with garlic butter); lamb and apricot hotpot or Somerset honeyed pork stew.

The cookery school - opened in April 2008 - is the newest enterprise in the business and a logical extension to the rest of the shop with many of the featured recipes based on 'great beef'. Here, the state-of-the-art premises combine a

cooking and dining area, as 'eating the food is an important part of each training course'.

Attracting customers ranging from the private individual to the corporate group for team-building days, individual events include an introductory course for beginner men, 'ladies that lunch', butchery and knife skills, and sessions for children - ranging from eight years of age to 'university survival'.

"We felt that children didn't get to cook in schools any more so we wanted to teach the next generation about food," says Abby. "At £39 we think the price of the course is very reasonable. It's not that we feel it's a duty, but educating the next generation is very important.... and hopefully one day they will buy from the shop!"

Although currently only generating around a tenth of the income of the shop, the cookery school clearly has a buzz and is growing fast.

"We've had corporate clients such as Eli Lilly, Microsoft and Virgin Media and also demonstrations from some of London's leading restaurants," says Abby.

With demonstrations from the Michelin starred Japanese restaurant, Nobu and the acclaimed Blue Elephant, specialising in Thai cuisine all selling out within days, the interest and demand looks certain to

Today the shop covers an impressive 10,000 square feet (having doubled in size two years ago); employs around 30 staff; and represents an investment of some £500,000.

But rather than sit back and watch it flourish, the team has quietly been developing a new shop in Weyhill near Andover - which opened in autumn 2009 - and are starting the process all over again!

