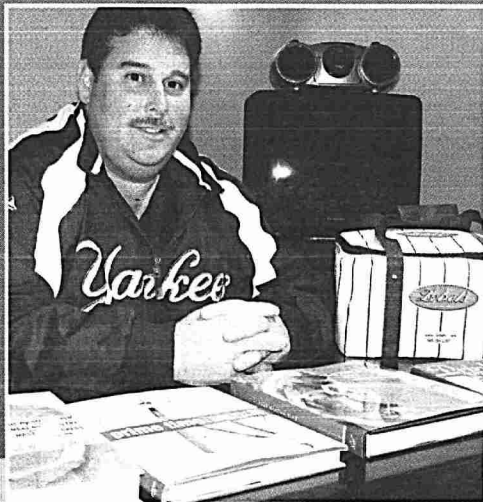


PURCHASE RESIDENT BRINGS LOCAL FLAVOR TO NEW YANKEE STADIUM



A view through the butcher's window at Yankee Stadium.

Photo/Michael Tutino



Photo/Mark Lungariello

Purchase resident Mark Lobel, with some of the nine cookbooks he and his family have written.

By **MARK LUNGARIELLO**

Going out to the baseball game doesn't mean eating foods like peanuts and Cracker Jack anymore.

"Who said hot dogs have to be the way to go?" 20-year Purchase resident Mark Lobel says. Lobel should know — his four star family-owned butcher shop just opened up near third base at New Yankee Stadium. In what is definitely a first for a ballpark, **Lobel's** of New York has set up a window where visitors can watch butchers cutting and preparing meat. Aside from supplying fresh cuts to the luxury suites and stadium restaurants, they also have a carving station where ravenous fans can pick up a signature sandwich with prime beef served on a home-baked roll.

Lobel, 44, co-owns the store with his father Stanley (also a Purchase resident), brother David of Rye Brook, and cousin Evan of Hastings-on-Hudson. Everyone in the family is a Yankee fan and longtime season ticket holder, Lobel says.

Growing up, he was always in awe of the Bronx Bombers' old ballpark.

"It was larger than life, you could never be close enough," he remembers. "If you were 20 rows back you wanted to be 10 rows back, if you were in the second deck you wanted to be in the first." It's a bit surreal then, that today, Lobel's is now a direct part of the Yankee Stadium experience.

The team itself has been limping a bit to start the season, including losses to the hated Red Sox in all five games the rivals have played this year. But, the fans can at least take some comfort in their stadium visits. "At least they're able to drown their sorrows with food," Lobel jokes.

The carving station is already one of the most popular concession stands at the new ballpark, with over 1,000 sandwiches sold per game. They go for \$15 a sandwich, but that hasn't dampened demand. "When you consider a hot dog is 7 bucks, it's not so bad considering the quality product you're getting," Lobel says.

Each game, Lobel's switches up their meat of choice with favorite cuts including filet mignon and prime rib. Fans are foaming at the mouth over the sandwiches. Recently, New Stadium Insider blog described the experience of eating one as such: "Envision your favorite food, favorite texture, favorite taste, favorite smell, favorite feeling, all in one bite...Is it possible that the best food we have ever eaten comes from a concession stand in a baseball stadium?"

It is possible according to Lobel, and that's just the point. Lobel's is nationally-known, recognized by *The Wall Street Journal* as the best butcher shop in America and one of the three best in the entire world. Lobel and other members of his family are noted experts in their field and serve on beef industry associations. The secret to the company's success has been the high-level prime meat they sell, which is dry-aged for six weeks and never frozen. "Certainly to have the best steak experience you need to have the best meat," Lobel says. Cooking is secondary, but is also important. That's why the Lobel family has written nine cookbooks including this year's "Lobel's Meat Bible." The family quite literally wrote "the book" on meats, which is why the Yankees came calling in the first place.

Legends Hospitality, the concessions company owned jointly by the Yankees and Dallas Cowboys, first contacted the family last year. They asked how Lobel's could enhance the stadium experience. From there, it has been a matter of brewing a formula that keeps fans wanting to come back.

The family business began in Austria in 1840. For the last 50 years, Lobel's has called Madison Avenue and 82nd home. Up until opening at the stadium, the only way to purchase Lobel's meat was at their store or on their web site. At first the family was hesitant to make the jump into a ball-park setting, but ultimately it seemed like too good of an opportunity to pass up (besides, the Yankee butcher shop is a smaller replica of the Lobel's Madison Avenue digs). And it was, of course, the Yankees. "It was like wow," Lobel says. "We said 'we're on the top of our game, they're on the top of their game' so it makes sense."

The Lobel's steak dynasty and Yankees baseball dynasty are a solid match so far, but there's sure to be other teams calling the Lobels based on their success at the new stadium. Lobel says the family has not ruled out expanding further. "Business is business," he says. "[If we open elsewhere] we'd look forward to feeding the Yankees fans when the Yankees come to town," he says.

For more information visit
www.Lobels.com.