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Gourmet butcher aims to duplicate Newton success

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NEWTON — His rack of lamb turned heads when he trimmed the fat and raised the price 26 years ago. But it's not the lamb alone that keeps **John Dewar** in the game.

Dewar, president of **John Dewar & Co. Inc.**, a \$12 million-plus meat and specialty foods wholesaler and retailer, is opening a second retail store at 277 Linden St. in Wellesley on Sept. 28.

His original store, at 1,950 square feet, is in Newton Centre and brings in about \$2 million annually and accounts for 15 percent of his revenue. The bulk of his revenue, about \$11 million, comes from wholesale clients that include some of the top restaurants, hotels, specialty stores and caterers in the area.

Dewar ships as far as Texas (natural poultry) and North Carolina (Angus beef, ducks, lamb, rack of pork) to wholesaler clients. His USDA processing facility in Roxbury caters to the wholesale trade, mostly.

Dewar calls the new 1,650-square-foot Wellesley space, formerly home to **Harrington's of Vermont**, a "little jewel box." It will also be a combination of old-fashioned butcher service in state-of-the-art surroundings, and will carry high-quality cuts of meats as well as cheeses, spices and a do-it-yourself Greek extra-virgin olive oil "filling station." As a gesture of goodwill - and good business - Dewar plans to carry Harrington's products, like its famous hams and bacon, in the new store as well as in Newton Centre.

The addition of five full-time and three part-time employees in the new store brings the company employee count to about 46. His goal is to match the Newton Centre store's \$2 million sales mark in four to five years.



John Dewar, president of John Dewar & Co. Inc. in Newton, is opening a second retail store in Wellesley at the end of the month.

Dewar, 61, began John Dewar & Co. in 1978, when Boston chefs were just whetting their appetites on Osetra caviar, Kobe beef and fresh game birds that weren't readily available through local purveyors. A prime example of that was lamb.

"A lot of markets wouldn't go near the rack," Dewar said. "And if they did they would trim it in a manner that was reasonably priced." And that meant bulking up the cuts by leaving on the fat.

Chef-owner **Richard Barron** of Il Capriccio has ordered meat from Dewar since opening his Waltham restaurant 23 years ago. He touts Dewar's personal service and consistent quality products among the top reasons he wouldn't stray: "I don't know what he does, but the lamb to me has always been incredibly outstanding."

Other clients include **Hamersley's Bistro, The Butcher Shop, Four Seasons Hotel Boston, Boston Harbor Hotel, Colonnade Hotel, Mistral,**

Phyllis Tobin Caterers and Cuisine Chez Vous.

The Wellesley store is next to long-time fishmonger and friend Kim Marden of Captain Marden's Seafoods. Twenty-two years ago, Dewar was eyeing a retail space next to Harrington's. One of his goals is to do collective marketing with other independent operators in the area, like Marden, to build a "stronger force" against the "forces of evil, like the Wal-Marts."

"They're destroying the small entrepreneurial person and spirit," said Dewar. "And a lot of people like myself do have pioneering spirits."

Dewar started his company with five partners, one of which was his wife Bonny Welch, who passed away two years ago. He thought of retiring. Then the space in Wellesley became available.

"Fate is playing a hand in this," he said.