

THE BEEF KITCHEN STORY

Capitalising on their close proximity to the Premiership leaders, three residents of the Stoll Foundation decided to set up a beef bar on the edge of the estate to sell good quality grub to fans.

Bob, who masterminded the venture despite being diagnosed with cancer last year, explained: "Football fans are usually ripped off outside the ground, having to settle for greasy hamburgers and chips. We wanted to do something different. At The Beef Kitchen we sell the real deal - roast four rib of beef, roast loin of pork, salt beef, honey roast ham, smoked salmon and cream cheese - all in freshly baked baps. All our produce is from Britain or Ireland and is delivered fresh the day before a game. We get up on the morning of a match at 5.30am to get everything ready. While Bob is the brains behind the business, 41-year-old Tim – with 16 years experience as an Army chef - is at the stove while Emmett, 32, put up the capital. All three work in the kitchen on match days, with the help of willing volunteers. What makes the venture all the more unique is that when the men first came to the Foundation around two years ago, they had nothing.

Bob, 56, who was in the Lifeguards, said: "I ended up here through a mixture of bad investments, business ideas going wrong, the loss of a 20 year marriage and home and a drinking problem. When I came to Sir Oswald Stoll it gave me an opportunity to deal with my problems in a positive way. It gave me my confidence back and it's the same for the others. When you are out there on the streets you don't realise that the service life could have done this to you - you lose that security and discipline and you don't know what to do with yourself.

Emmett, 32, a former Royal Marine who scrimped and saved for a year to invest most of the capital and buy the trailer, said: "We are out there for love at the moment but this is for the long term benefit of the Foundation. Usually you would have to wait five years for a pitch outside Chelsea but because we are on Foundation land, we can always be here. A few years ago I would never have thought this was possible. I was on the streets and I'd been through the mill but now I'm coming through on the other side.

The success of the first season of the beef kitchen has seen several of the team go on to full time employment and has spurred the team on to widen the scope of the project to include a breakfast menu next season. 'It just goes to show that SOSF is a sanctuary and a launching pad. The Beef Kitchen epitomises everything the Foundation stands for - and if we can push the venture forward for the benefit of everyone, then we'll do it."