

**Don's first job** not counting his paper routes was in the same meat shop that he owns today and renamed D. W. Whitaker Meats in 1991. He waited on people and cleaned after school and weekends for the family who had owned the meat shop for 45 years. Don says, "They taught me a lot. 'Make sure the customer is happy.' I always wanted to have my own business and I was eager to learn."



The meat shop is located in Cleveland's national historic landmark Westside Market, a massive arched yellow-brick coliseum that was dedicated in 1912 as a permanent public market. The building has a lot of character, and there are more than a few colorful characters vending the stalls and shops that have been in some families for generations. There is a sense that these are not just employees—but people who seem to have a genuine relationship with the food they sell.

Don keeps that old-time, first name relationship with his loyal customers and takes advantage of the most sophisticated weighing, pricing and labeling equipment. "When I first bought the shop, I worked 60 hours and more a week. I had two employees. Now I have five people full time and eight part-time people on weekends. We've added so much more. Now we have homemade chicken and turkey sausages. We opened a new deli meat case in October and added two more Ishida Astra scales that label the deli bags very neatly. We custom cut and trim our fresh pork and poultry and wrap it in butcher paper. We needed a price-computing scale that printed labels with all the food information and our distinctive logo. We needed all the equipment linked together and to a PC."

Biros Sales Inc., in Cleveland suggested the Ishida Astra® Retail Printer with Astralink® PC software. The Astra communicates via an RS-232 serial connection, and Don uses his netbook portable PC for all PLU and price updates. The easy-to-use Astra label-printing scale offers more features for less cost. The operator-friendly keyboard speeds up transactions with up to 88 preset keys. Astralink PLU editing software allows customization of the operator keysheet inserts. The Astra can store hundreds of PLUs and comes standard with eight label formats.

If you go, a Westside Market veteran advises shoppers to hone bargaining skills and bring cash—small bills, fives or tens, and a shopping bag. (Whitaker Meats accepts credit cards, of course.) To get the best of these offerings you must do what your grandparents did—forge relationships. Forget how you behave at the grocery store; this is no grocery store. This is a place where your butcher knows your name; your fishmonger personally scales your fish; where you can spend 30 minutes tasting and buying cheese.

And that is the key: The energy. Pure, kinetic, unrestrained energy makes Westside Market the wonderful place it is. Haggling, deal-striking, deal strike downs, and conversation. Astra can handle it all with the ability to override a price in the heat of the bargain or block overrides for consistent pricing. There is life and energy everywhere, and it is very fun. The atmosphere makes D. W. Whitaker Meats a destination, not only a location.

Go to <http://dwmeats.com> and [westsidemarket.org](http://westsidemarket.org) for more. ■

