

Thomas Odermatt, founder

Roli Roti

To understand rotisserie grilling, one first has to understand meat. And few people have taken as much time to gain the deep knowledge of producing and preparing the finest rotisserie as Rotisseur Thomas Odermatt.

The son of a Swiss “Metzgermeister,” or Master Butcher, Thomas Odermatt literally grew up in his family’s butcher shop in the Swiss Alps. From his father, Otto, he learned the importance of using the right cuts for the right purpose, and of choosing only meats that came from livestock pastured on open land. From his mother, Maria, he learned how to take these meats and prepare them in the perfect way for grilling on the shop’s rotisserie, a specialty offered to customers only on Saturdays.

Even though all the other butcher shops in the village also offered rotisserie, only at Metzgerei Odermatt was there a line out the door and around the corner. This is because the perfect cut with the right preparation made for an irresistible combination that others could not match. To this day, Thomas still uses his mother’s spice rub as the basis for the seasoning of RoliRoti’s famous grilled chicken, and in the tradition of his father, insists on the finest, sustainably-grown meats.

Upon his arrival in Berkeley, California, Thomas became swept up in the local gourmet food movement. This was a natural development for him, as he had come to Berkeley to further studies in organic farming he had begun at the Strickhof, or Agriculture School, of ETH Zürich. Given his upbringing, it was not surprising that he focused on meats. In particular, Thomas found that the flat-grate grilling method used by most American chefs and home cooks left the meat dry, tough and caramelized. He began using the European rotisserie method when cooking for friends, who reacted with such enthusiasm that Thomas decided to write a business plan for a mobile rotisserie grill company, and thus the idea for RoliRoti was born.