

Jack & Mary's Serves Up a Winning Recipe for Success

Four years ago when retired Omaha Police Officer Ken Oetter became the owner of Jack & Mary's restaurant at 655 N. 114th St., he never imagined his new career would land him in hot water.

"On occasions when we get busy, my wife and I will grab aprons and help with dishwashing," Ken explained. "I'm surprised at how much work is required—it can get absolutely stressful. As a police officer I've dealt with high levels of stress and sometimes this place can push it."

Jack & Mary's restaurant has been an Omaha tradition for more than 40 years. Originally named Jack & Mary's Cliff House, the restaurant was located

in Old Mill Centre prior to moving to its current address.

The restaurant offers a full menu, including steaks, seafood, burgers, sandwiches, salads, breakfast items served anytime and a full bar, but its signature dish under its various owners has remained fried chicken, coleslaw, mashed potatoes and gravy.

"Our menu features food that the original owner called 'farm food,'" explained Ken's son, Kip, who is the restaurant's general manager. "Our fried chicken, gravy, and coleslaw recipes date back to the 1930s. How many restaurants can say that?"

The restaurant serves an average of 9,000 pounds of chicken each month, according to Kip. "Three-fourths of our bone-in chicken sales are fried and the rest are grilled," he noted. "I've never seen anyone cut chicken like we do, but this is the way it was done on the farm so that everyone could have a different piece of the chicken."

Catering and carryout represent a large part of Jack and Mary's business. "About one-third of our total revenue is carryout," Kip acknowledged. "Our carryout counter has a computer and two telephones, and on Sunday night we have three people at that station because we get so busy. We will do 150 to 200 carryout orders, which is uncommon for a restaurant setting like this."

Families and older couples are among the regular customers



Murals of farm scenes help create a rustic atmosphere at Jack & Mary's restaurant, which is open Monday-Thursday, from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

who frequent Jack and Mary's. "We have some customers who come in here every night of the week," Kip observed.

"Some older couples will split a large chicken dinner because they're unable to eat a full portion themselves. We see young couples come in with kids and the next thing you know they're hanging off our statue of Rex, which Guinness lists as the largest rooster in the world."

One advantage of the restaurant's current location is its proximity to First National Bank at 114th and West Dodge Road. "We chose to

go there from day one because it's right across the street," noted Ken, who is responsible for managing the restaurant's finances. "When our point-of-sale system malfunctioned, the bank provided a loan so we could replace it."

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First National Bank was also able to refinance the restaurant's original purchase loan and provide a lower rate. "We refinanced and it worked out really well," Ken added. "I'm very happy with the bank and the people who work there, from the tellers to the loan officers."



Oetter family members (from left) Ken, Barbara, Kip and Rebecca. The Oetter's oldest daughter is a Sarpy County deputy and their youngest daughter is a sergeant with the Omaha Police Department.



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