

LORAIN



RICHARD PAYERCHIN — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Volunteers at Faith Ministries Christian Center, 1306 Euclid Ave., Lorain, serve a hot meal as part of the church's food service on Nov. 22. The church has changed its food pantry to become a "choice" pantry, allowing clients to pick what items they want to take home on the second and fourth Fridays of the month.

PANTRY CHANGES TO CHOICE AS CHURCH SERVES HUNDREDS OF MEALS

By Richard Payerchin
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Healthy eating will get a little easier for those in need with a change at one of Lorain's food pantries.

For the last 16 months, hundreds of people have gone for food distributed by Faith Ministries Christian Center, 1306 Euclid Ave. in Lorain.

On Nov. 22, the Christian Center changed its pantry practice. Instead of hand-

ing out bags of food to recipients, the church will become a "choice" pantry with clients selecting the items to take home.

"It will change things as far as the clients," said Shirley Keith, director of food services for Faith Ministries Christian Center.

With bagged items, clients were grateful, but some would remove some foods if they did not know how to prepare them, Keith said.

People also might take out foods due to dietary restrictions of themselves or

family members, she said. "But with them going around and picking, they can pick what they're familiar with using," Keith said.

The church has its food pantry from 4-6 p.m. on the second and fourth Fridays of the month; a hot meal also is served during that time on the fourth Friday.

The day was changed this week to accommodate Thanksgiving, said Pastor Diana Lindsey.

Lindsey and Keith had a ceremonial ribbon-cutting to open the choice pantry.

The Nov. 22 gathering included demonstrations from Alison Knight, registered dietitian with Lorain County Health and Dentistry.

Lynn Rebman, preparedness coordinator for the Lorain City Health Department, also was working there with Marissa Wayner and Katherine Bray of the Lorain County General Health District.

"We're trying to increase accessibility to healthier food in Lorain County," Wayner said.

The choice program allows clients to grocery shop for items, she said.

"People that have dietary restrictions and things like that, can choose," Wayner said.

On Nov. 22, staples available included milk, eggs, juice, instant mashed potatoes, stuffing, corn muffin mix and other items.

Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio sent 100 frozen chickens for clients to take home.

Knight showed how to prepare baked green bean

casserole, advising people to add low-sodium soup and go easy on the French fried onions if those foods don't match their diets.

Clients received samples of the casserole and cranberry sauce, along with a hot meal of chicken with gravy, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, dressing, cabbage and noodles.

"It's a lot of food," Keith said. "We serve a lot of people. We want to make sure they get enough."

Lindsey agrees, adding "It's about giving back."

On Nov. 22, the Christian Center changed its pantry practice. Instead of handing out bags of food to recipients, the church will become a "choice" pantry with clients selecting the items to take home.

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HIDDEN GEM



ERIC BONZAR — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Diso's Bistro At All Nations, 4286 Oberlin Ave., Lorain, has been serving gourmet food and fine spirits — in a casual environment — since 2006.

GAMBLE PAYS OFF FOR DISO'S BISTRO

By Brandon Baker
news@morningjournal.com

Mark Diso simply shrugs while discussing his restaurant's online ratings.

He is proud that Diso's Bistro at All Nation's is the top-rated Lorain restaurant on Yelp, but he believes it has a lot to do with him capturing palates in an area without many options.

"There's not a whole lot going on here," he says. "Drive up and down (Lorain streets), you'll see the Italian Club, the Polish Club, the Mexican Club — everything's private. I kind of broke that stride. I'm not a beer-and-shot joint, and I'm not private. I'm doing good because there's really nothing in the area."

That doesn't mean the modest entrepreneur thinks anybody could be in his position. From his food to his drink offerings, Diso knows he's doing things that others in the area haven't tried.

The bistro has been around for 11 years, constantly reminding Diso of what a gamble can produce if you're willing to take a risk.

Diso had done everything from serving to washing dishes to management for restaurateurs like George and Jim Sortino of Sandusky for years, but grew tired of working for others.

He credits his wife, Janet, with giving him the courage to try his own concept. He was in his early 40s at the time, and figured he could still get a job if the

gamble didn't pay off. "You've done it for so long, do it for yourself already," Diso said, recalling his wife's words of encouragement.

"She's really the one who pushed, and here I am 11 years later."

Diso's was more of a pub for most of its first year before becoming a full-blown bistro.

The turning point came about eight months in when Diso hosted a four-course dinner paired with beer from Great Lakes Brewing Co.

Today, customers rave about Diso's filet mignon, which is cut to order from five to 12 ounces. Chefs Richard Kurtz and Jonathan Born use the remaining meat to create 100-per-

cent filet mignon burgers. Diso receives an equal amount of praise for their potato skins. The smoked chicken, pancetta and boursin cheese that top them have a bit to do with that.

"We don't put dried bacon bits on them like everybody else," he said.

"They're probably our No. 1 selling appetizer."

Additionally, Diso's offers about 40 different craft beers in cans and bottles. Diso believes he was an early craft beer pioneer in Lorain.

Diso says opening the bistro was an effort that couldn't have been accomplished without the help of family and friends. Housed in the former All Nations Club, the site needed new walls, floors and bathroom

adjustments that would make it compliant with the American Disabilities Act. A carpenter friend constructed the bar and shelves.

"I really gutted it out," Diso said.

"I literally demolished it. It's all from scratch."

Despite more than a decade in business, Diso says he still gets first-time customers who might live five minutes away.

They often tell him his establishment is a hidden gem. Diso doesn't object to that claim.

"I don't advertise, no fancy sign, nothing flashy," he says.

"Once we get you in the door, we try to schmooze you with the food and the booze."

DISO'S BISTRO AT ALL NATIONS

4286 Oberlin Ave., Lorain
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Hours: 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

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Mark Diso, restaurateur

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DETERMINATION PAYS OFF



ERIC BONZAR — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Chris' Restaurant owner Chris Manofski's grandsons Nick Danailovski, from left, and Phillip Danailovski, Manofski and son-in-law Pepe Danailovski pose in the Lorain restaurant.

HOMEMADE COOKING, HARD WORK KEEP CHRIS' GOING STRONG

By Brandon Baker
news@morningjournal.com

Chris Manofski has the dogged mentality you'd expect of somebody who operates a business with a 52-year history.

Shortly after opening Chris' Restaurant on the Lake, a customer came in speaking glowingly about another nearby diner, warning Manofski that his business was in trouble. He soaked his response in the determination that kept his family restaurant around for years to come.

"I said, 'no, I'm gonna close them out,'" he remembers with a laugh. "We have homemade cooking, the others didn't have it. That's why."

With workers from the old Lorain Ford Assembly Plant and other area employers to serve, Manofski didn't have much time to think about the competition back then. Instead, the Macedonia native focused on quality food and creating a comfortable atmosphere.

"If you don't work, you don't make it," he said plainly. "I don't care what kind of trade. You can be boss, but you've got to be a working boss."

Chris' Restaurant has been at 2812 W. Erie Ave. since 1981. It had previous locations at the Pearl Avenue-West 28th Street intersection and further west on Erie. Chris has the help of his wife, Delores, son-in-law Pepi Danailovski and two grandsons, Phillip and Nick Danailovski.

Pepi came to the U.S. from Macedonia in 1988, nearly 30 years after Manofski arrived. Pepi made the arduous transition from coal miner to cook while also trying to learn English. He learned from former employees, and began to feel comfortable in the kitchen after about eight months. Today, Danailovski and his sons are the masterminds behind many of the restaurant's sandwiches and specials.

Those include the mountainous, 12-ounce Monster Burger, the Italian sandwich, with pepperoni, salami and ham, and homemade garlic soup.

"Our specials are always freshly made," Danailovski said. "After a while, you get a feel for what people like."

Danailovski says breaded pork chops are the restaurant's most popular dish. They used to be served just once or twice a week, but the demand became too high. Now, Chris' Restaurant serves at least 200 orders of breaded pork chops per week.

Demand remains high for dishes like Hungarian Style Chicken Paprikash and potato soup, which the family has served since the restaurant opened.

While customers who have aged with the restaurant visit weekly for those meals, the family credits Phillip with attracting many of the new faces they see. Pepi, who admits to rarely using the Internet outside of paying bills online, recalls his astonishment when Phillip offered to create a Facebook page for the business.

"We're still old-fashioned with some stuff," Pepi said. "We had to figure some things out because 10 years ago it was easier. Some of the younger generation, they didn't even know what paprikash was (before seeing the restaurant's Facebook page). You have to adjust."

Added Phillip: "It's helped a lot. We see a lot of new faces here."

While the younger men in his family develop new ideas and uphold the traditional ones, it's common to see Manofski on the floor greeting customers and cracking jokes.

"You have to talk to them, ask about their family, say something," Manofski said. "That's the main thing in this business."

Jim Marzavas, a longtime patron and friend who operates Marzavas and Son's Swiss-American Jewelers in downtown Lorain, said



ERIC BONZAR — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Chris' Restaurant, 2812 W. Erie Ave., Lorain, serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

consistency has kept Chris' Restaurant on the Lake open for five-plus decades.

"He keeps his prices right, and he's an honest person," Marzavas said. "He serves his customers the same way since the time he started. You eat this food now and then you come in tomorrow or 10 weeks from now, it's going to be the same thing."

"He never changed. He's the best."

CHRIS' RESTAURANT

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