

De Dee's Dairy continues tradition of 'fast, friendly service, generous portions at a fair price, and a lot of flavors'

BY PATRICK J BRADLEY
Senior Contributing Reporter

Long before supermarkets were invented, there were more than 30 dairies in Niagara Falls. They all delivered milk and other dairy products to stores, restaurants and homes.

One of the first dairies was F. Buzzelli & Sons, which was founded in 1912 at 521 19th St. Now a residential neighborhood, it was farmland at the time and had good grazing land for the Buzzelli's cows.

The business was founded by an Italian immigrant named Francesco "Frank" Buzzelli. After serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II and earning a Cornell University degree, Buzzelli's grandson, also named Frank, joined the family business and opened the Creamland dairy at the corner of Cayuga Drive and what is now Niagara Falls Boulevard. There he sold homemade ice cream, soft custard and a popular frozen treat called lemon ice. Buzzelli's lemon ice recipe remains a secret to this day, but you can still enjoy it in the place Creamland once stood.

The old Creamland is now called De Dee's Dairy. Founded by Louise LaMarca in the early 1980s, De Dee's daily attracts warm-weather crowds who stand patiently in line to order bountiful servings of their favorite frozen confections.

"Louise built this on fast, friendly service, generous portions at a fair price, and a lot of flavors," said manager and co-owner Gary Wilcox, who, with nephew Bob Urso, purchased the business from her almost two decades ago.

"We knew Louise was starting to think about selling it," Wilcox said. "Bob approached her first. She said, 'I'm going to run it for one more year. Then we'll talk about it.'"

LaMarca was as good as her word. They talked, she sold it to them and, when they took over in 2006, the popular ice cream stand didn't miss a beat, Wilcox said.



SUNY Niagara nursing student and De Dee's manager Alexia Graham, left, co-owner Gary Wilcox and Niagara Falls High School student Alexandra Ventry line up in front of a display showcasing De Dee's Dairy's expansive menu of frozen treats for the 2024 season.



"We were lucky," he said. "It took right off at the beginning. Why? Because we didn't change a thing."

De Dee's was the first of what is now a trio of successful family-owned businesses operated by Urso, Gary and son Ryan Wilcox, Bill Payne and his brother Jonathan Payne. Their other two businesses, Mom's Restaurant and David's Home of the Steak Hoagy, had been mainstays of the LaSalle food scene for decades.

"It started with De Dee's in 2006," Urso recalled. "In 2013, Mom's Restaurant was closing. We took that over in 2014. We took over David's in 2016 and had it until 2022."

Mom's subsequently moved to Payne Plaza on Military Road in the Town of Niagara. David's was reborn in 2022 as David's 716 Bar & Grill and is open at the

De Dee's Dairy

The retro ice cream shop with a soda fountain vibe is located at 8715 Niagara Falls Blvd., at Cayuga Drive, Niagara Falls. Hours: are Sunday, noon to 9 p.m.; Monday-Thursday, 3-9 p.m.; and Friday and Saturday, noon to 9:30 p.m. For more, call 716-297-8856, visit david's716barandgrill.com/de-dees-dairy, and follow on Facebook and Instagram.

same location. Managing De Dee's has led to some welcome changes in Gary Wilcox's life. After 39 years as an optician, he sold his Lewiston-based business and retired from the profession.

"It just wasn't the same as when I started. It's all about the insurance now," he said.

De Dee's gives him what he calls a "positive purpose." He oversees an energetic group of 35 high school and college-aged employees who share his dedication to customer satisfaction, and he's delighted that many former employees have earned college degrees. Some have gone on to enjoy successful careers as teachers, nurses and lawyers. One of De Dee's former counter girls is currently in medical school, Wilcox said.

Wilcox is quick to note that his wife, Debi, also plays an important role in the ice cream parlor's success.

"Without her I would be in trouble," he said. "Make sure you put that in there."

Meanwhile, De Dee's keeps getting bigger. This season's offerings include 66 flavors of Perry's ice cream and four varieties

of homemade soft custard. Although vanilla and chocolate are perennial favorites, other custard flavors such as orange chocolate and black raspberry are offered during the season.

Sundaes are always popular and, this year, De Dee's is introducing a sundae of the week. The first two sundaes celebrated St. Patrick's Day and Easter.

"This week it's an eclipse sundae," Wilcox said.

Also new to the menu this year are Dole Soft Serve frozen fruit confections. Dairy-, gluten- and lactose-free, they're safe for people with such dietary restrictions.

Of course, that doesn't mean De Dee's youthful employees can't create the treats that have delighted ice cream lovers for generations.

"They can make banana splits look like artwork," Wilcox said.

DATE SET FOR 3RD ANNUAL COL. BRUCE SUTHERLAND GOLF TOURNAMENT

Submitted by the Historical Association of Lewiston

Another golf season is upon us, and the Historical Association of Lewiston is pleased to kick it off with the third annual Col. Bruce Sutherland Golf Tournament.

This year, it is scheduled for Monday, May 13, at the Niagara Frontier Golf Club on Lake Road

in Youngstown.

The entry is \$150 per golfer, which includes a round of golf with cart, lunch, dinner and refreshments all day. Registration begins at 10 a.m., with a shotgun start at noon.

The proceeds include a donation by the tournament to Downriver Post 7487 of the VFW,

which is used to enhance the annual Sutherland Scholarship in Bruce's name. Additional net proceeds go to operation of the museum at 469 Plain St., Lewiston.

Currently, there are openings for golfers from singles to foursomes. We are also looking for sponsors to help put on this im-

portant event and contribute to the fostering of Lewiston's important and unique history.

Contact Tom Collister at Cu-

rator@historiclewiston.org or call the museum at 716-754-4214 weekday afternoons.

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~ WEEKLY SPECIALS ~
MON - OPEN for Breakfast from 7-11:30 for the ECLIPSE
TUE 6AM-2PM - Spaghetti and Meatballs, Chicken Parm, Eggplant Parm, Penne Parm
WED 6AM-2PM - Hot Turkey Sandwich or Fish - Haddock: Breaded-Battered-Baked
THURS 6AM-2PM - Shepherd Pie or Fish - Haddock: Breaded-Battered-Baked
FRI 6AM-2PM - Haddock, Fish Sandwiches, Tuna Melts & New England Clam Chowder
SAT & SUN OPEN AT 6AM - Eggs Benedict, Banana Walnut Pancakes, Spinach & Feta Omelet & Our Full Breakfast & Lunch Menu

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