

Safety first at Silo, as Lewiston restaurant opens for summer season

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GM/Managing Editor

Traditionally, the month of May brings about a season preview article on The Silo Restaurant, wherein management discusses new menu items and expresses hope for a warm and dry summer season in Lewiston.

This year, the talk was quite different as the Water Street eatery opened.

"You know, 22 years we've been doing this. This is the 23rd season. And, I mean, our No. 1 goal has always been to make money. And now, that's not our No. 1 goal anymore. Our No. 1 goal is to keep the staff and our customers healthy and safe," proprietor Alan Hastings said Tuesday.

The COVID-19 pandemic has left the world at a near standstill for almost three months. In March, Gov. Andrew Cuomo put "New York State on PAUSE" to slow a possible spread of the coronavirus. His executive order closed restaurant doors – relegating staffs to takeout and delivery.

"I never, ever thought this would happen, but I will say that we are making the absolute best of the situation that we can," Silo General Manager Lexi Alfieri said. "Obviously, you know, we were open five weeks later than normal, because we didn't feel the need to try and rush opening. We wanted to make sure it was safe. We wanted to make sure we had everything in place to make sure we're operating as safe as possible."

To that end, The Silo has implemented an impressive slate of safety measures.

"You'll notice that all of our employees have a mask and gloves on at all times. We provided each of them with a mask. And we are responsible for sanitizing that for them, so when they come in for their next shift it's already sanitized," Alfieri said. "We did our first ever Zoom meeting; we had all of our employees logged on in a Zoom meeting and we did a training for handwashing, self-symptom evaluation. They know there's absolutely no penalty – if they feel sick in the morning, they are not coming to work, and there's no penalty for that. Their temperature gets taken before every shift."

She added, "There are Plexiglas barriers at every ordering station. ... After every customer orders, we sanitize the barrier. If they use a credit card, we sanitize the credit card terminal and the pen. We ordered new credit card terminals for this year that face the customers and accept contactless pay like Apple Pay or like on your Apple Watch or your iPhone. We ordered them, that way customers can utilize contactless pay. That's great and we definitely encourage that. ...

"They're sanitizing the (caboose ice cream) window, because people lean on that."

Outside the ordering area/kitchen, "We eliminated the takeout window, and instead customers are picking up their orders from our staff that are wearing gloves and a mask," Alfieri said. "And we did that so that customers are not all at the window together. We have a line barrier put up, so they can actually approach 6 feet from the takeout window, and our staff are handing them their bags. They're calling them



up; that way they're coming up one at a time.

"And we also eliminated the condiments station and we're handing them the condiments to go; that way they're not self-serving, and it just eliminates that contact and that exposure, too. And same with straws and lids: We're handing them their cup straws and lids with every order."

Customers are asked to wear a mask when ordering or picking up food.

"We have signs asking them to do that. We have a sign hanging at the caboose. We have one on the deck and then we have one inside the restaurant. The sign also asks them to keep social distance, and we have stickers on the ground that say, 'Keep social distance. Stand here 6 feet apart.' We measured all of them 6 feet apart," Alfieri said. "Customers are not allowed to sit on the deck or patio yet. But we did already measure the tables 6 feet apart, so when we're ready to go, we wanted to have everything in place. ...

"We have a sink by the registers that is available for handwashing. We have multiple pumps of Germ-X. Even though customers are taking their orders to go, we are still offering precautions for them to sanitize their hands."

One of The Silo's biggest customer complaints in past years was the wait time. That problem has been fixed as, "We actually implemented a new system for curbside ordering, which is on our website," Alfieri said. "Cus-

tomers can order online, pay online. They call us when they get here, they input their car info online, and we run it right out to their car. So, customers who want a contactless experience order right online, pay online, we bring it out to them.

"We are also accepting phone orders, which means they come in to pay, but their food is ready when they get here. So, it eliminates that wait time. They pick it up, they get off the property – it's good to go."

Patrons can order takeout at the counter, but, "With walk-ins, we're monitoring that everyone's 6 feet apart. Yes, we have the stickers on the ground, but we also have staff that's doing that – walking around and making sure everyone's 6 feet apart, just to make sure," Alfieri said.

Moreover, each table in the adjoining park – where people are permitted to sit – has a two-sided sign indicating its level of cleanliness.

"One side says, 'Safe. This table has been sanitized and is safe to sit at. When you are done sitting here please flip over so we know to sanitize it. Thank you!' And it also reminds customers to wash their hands before eating," Alfieri said. "And then we flip it over and it says, 'Stop. This table has not been sanitized yet. Please choose a sanitized table or notify us to sanitize it for you. ... In ef-

is trained to sanitize the table, the sign – both sides of the sign – and the benches."

If it seems no detail was overlooked ... well, that's because it appears no detail was overlooked.

"We pretty much covered every aspect," Alfieri said. "Anything that is touched by a customer is sanitized the second after that customer leaves. We have brand-new positions for our staff – they're working harder than ever. But it's working. We're getting every single customer that comes through, it's almost guaranteed they're saying, 'Oh, wow, I can't believe that you're doing all this,' or 'I can't believe everything new in place.' And, you know, that makes the staff feel great; it shows what they're doing is working."

Hastings said, "I'm really proud of Lexi. She's just amazing. I mean, when I called her, I said, 'OK, our goal, we're not watching our numbers.' She is not gonna have to meet the payroll numbers and everything. We need our staff to keep people safe. We need those extra people for cleaning tables.

"And we're limiting our customers. I mean, it's not a good recipe, but if we can keep everybody safe and make a couple of bucks, I'll be really happy at the end of the summer."

Alfieri simply said, "Our goal, above all else – above making money, above having those slamming days that we look forward to – it's making sure that everyone's safe. We're taking orders slower than normal and we're operating a little bit differently, but that's just to ensure everyone's safety. We want to do what we can to make sure that our customers can safely eat their favorite summertime food."

The Silo Restaurant, at 115 N. Water St., is open from noon to 8 p.m. daily, offering a full menu for takeout orders. Both cash and credit cards are accepted. For more information, call 754-9680 or visit <https://www.lewistonsilo.com>.



ports to keep our customers and employees safe we have implemented these signs to ensure we sanitize each table in between every customer use.' And our staff

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