

Michael's Restaurant



Owner: Mike Mosser
20th Ave. Mall
515 20th Ave. SE
Minot, ND 58701
701-837-6133
Opened: June 2002



Michael's Italian American Restaurant is not just a family-style establishment. It's also family operated. Mike Mosser's five daughters all work in the business: the oldest does the books, the second oldest is the general manager and may take over the business some day; the third daughter helps with expo and as a busser; the fourth is a server and busses tables; and the fifth, who just graduated from high school, does bussing and expo. One son-in-law bartends; the other two work as needed. Mike's wife is a nurse and also helps when needed. Mike says, "My dad was a meat cutter and I learned from him and now my daughters are learning from me. I never thought that would happen!"

In fact, Mike never thought he'd own a restaurant. He was a meat cutter for 35 years. He was working out of town and getting tired of the drive when his sister and brother in law asked Mike if he wanted to buy their small, 14-table restaurant called Nomocha's. He recalls telling them, "The only thing I know about restaurants is eating in them!"

But he was tired of driving, so he went to the bank and bought it. He changed the menu, cut his own steaks, and developed some new sauces. After three years, Mosser was making a name for himself and the eatery became too small for its growing clientele. Two years ago, he was approached by the owner of the 20th Avenue Mall, east of K-mart, about putting a restaurant there. "We started with 4,060 square feet and 165 chairs. We recently finished an area where we can hold banquets for larger parties. We also added onto the kitchen for a total of 6,090 square feet."

What makes Michael's Restaurant so popular is that it isn't a chain. Everything is homemade, including sausage and soups; all meats are hand cut or ground on site. "We give them a good value for their money. We go through a lot of to-go boxes; it's a good amount of food--authentic and homemade. We like to experiment with new creations. We don't have to call the corporate office to add something customers like to the menu."

The rapid success of Michael's hasn't all been easy. He says it's hard to find and keep good employees. He has a staff of 60-70 people. "There were a lot of sleepless nights. But if things are run right, with good food and good service, people will come. I'm glad I took the chance."

But the restaurant has been so busy that Mike doesn't get much sleep anymore. He tries to take a night or two off during the summer to golf. This fall, he'll pour his energies into growing the new banquet and meeting facility. That's when he will need more help from Mary Beth Votava at the Small Business Development Center in Minot. So far, he's relied on several banks: First International, Affinity, and United Community. "I'm just getting to know what SBDC can do for me and, in the next year or so, they will be able to help out."

Mosser says people from Bismarck and Fargo have asked him to open Michael's Italian American Restaurants in those cities. But it depends on what his family wants to do. He thinks his second daughter may take over the business some day. But for now, he's happy creating his weekly specials and soup of the day, which today is *Chicken and Wild Rice!*

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