



The Maine Diner in Wells Knows How To Treat Its Guests Portland Press Herald Thursday, February 5, 1998 By KATHY LABUSKI Staff Writer

While the Maine Diner in Wells is known for its traditional and delicious food, Myles Henry is most proud of the staff.

"Our biggest thing is to try to treat guests like they're in our own home," says Henry, who along with his brother Dick, have owned and operated the Route 1 eatery since 1983. "I really think that's what we do well."

The actual diner building dates back to the mid- to late-1950's. The location was the site of a produce stand called, "The Maine," the shell of which is part of the current dining room. The rest of the building has undergone major renovations, and the only original thing remaining in the restaurant is the pie rack.

The food is basic and made well. Just about all of the recipes were handed down to the Henry brothers from their grandmother and mother, and include dishes such as the famous lobster pie, the award-winning seafood chowder, and more stick-to-your ribs kind of food such as meatloaf, burgers, and pot roast. Breakfast is available anytime.

"It's not fancy food," says Myles. "It's very practical food. An egg is an egg, but how you serve it, how it is presented, that's what counts."

The Maine Diner is open year-round, and busy just about all of the time. Last year, the staff served 254,000 guests, including just about an equal number of tourists and locals. "Local business is really our customer base," says Myles. "We have very loyal locals year-round, but very loyal seasonal people too."

Myles says they've spent years building up their business, at first just serving breakfast and lunch, and working their way to serving dinner. In an area where boiled lobster dinners are the norm, the Maine Diner has found success going a different route.

The Diner's reputation and good food has gotten them recognition, both local and national. Their seafood chowder was a regular People's Choice winner in Ogunquit's Christmas By The Sea festival's chowder competition, and this past summer the Diner was featured on the "Today" show.

The Diner was mentioned in a book by Jane and Michael Stern on how to find good food while traveling, and the "Today" show was doing a story on the Sterns and their new book. Three of the Sterns' favorite U.S. restaurants were chosen to share the spotlight with them on the program, and one of them was the Maine Diner.

"That was huge," says Myles. "It put us in a national light. It was initially overwhelming, but I'm extremely proud."

The Maine Diner employs 30 year-round people, says Myles, who "are the best at what they do." He says the Diner has gotten a reputation as being a good place to work, and that his help "treats this like it's their own business. There's pride in here."

This past summer, the Henry's turned a vacant house on the property into a gift shop full of Maine Diner and diner-related stuff. There are T-shirts, sweatshirts, children's clothes, bumper stickers, watches, aprons, posters, and more. "We started with selling a couple of T-shirts at the restaurant," explains Myles, "but kind of started to get out of control." Having the gift shop as a kind of annex to the restaurant is "a nice combination," he says. "We've developed a kind of mystique."

The Henry brothers don't have any plans to expand the Diner or to add a second location, just to "continue to fine-tune it so it makes for a better experience for our guests."

"Anything we do now is just to do it not bigger, but better," Myles says.

The Maine Diner is open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and until 9 p.m. in the summer.