

Local spotlight

Stage Deli has been area hit for 45 years

Popular eatery that features 50 dishes with corned beef updates its fare with catering menus.

Maureen McDonald / Special to The News

WEST BLOOMFIELD -- Back in 1962, a host of stars, including Robert Goulet and Jayne Mansfield, performed summer stock theater at Southfield's Northland Playhouse. Harriet and Jack Goldberg captured that thespian flavor in their newly opened Stage Deli in Oak Park.



Forty-five years later, customers, their children and grandchildren still order mouth-watering favorites with '60s monikers. Sandwiches include "The West Side Story," with hot corned beef, coleslaw and Russian dressing; the "Carousel," lean and tender house-baked ham with imported Swiss cheese and mayo; and "Bye, Bye Birdie," house-roasted turkey breast, chopped liver and Russian dressing.

"We serve 50 different dishes with corned beef," said Steve Goldberg, a tax attorney and CEO of The Stage Deli, located in West Bloomfield since 1982. Annually, he sells 50,000 salads and 60,000 sandwiches made of Kelly Corned Beef, sized and spiced to order by the Chicago-based meat supplier. A special cooker and steam cabinet keep his beef fresh for consistent taste.

More than 4,000 customers a week stream into the 150-seat restaurant, where the 35,000 cups of chicken soup sold annually are made fresh daily

from chickens cooked on site. At least 50 percent are regulars, some returning for two or three meals in a restaurant open seven days a week.

The Stage offers six to seven rotating specials and a variety of fish and vegetarian offerings.

"My husband and I eat here once a week. We come for comfort food," said Fran Levinson of Commerce. "You run into everyone here, almost like a wedding reception."

Competition is as pungent as a pickle soaked all day in brine. The Bronx Deli opened recently in Pontiac. The Deli Unique flourishes across Orchard Lake Road. Bread Basket Deli has numerous outlets, including one in Oak Park.



So, how does The Stage trumpet its brand beyond its customers?

The eatery recently developed a series of catering menus for up to 300 guests aimed at tailgate, office, holiday and bereavement gatherings.

Offerings include the Stage roll-up tray, an assortment of flatbread-wrapped sandwiches competing with the pita shops, along with bite-sized portions of its favorite stuffed cabbage, mini-Reubens, and a smoked whitefish spread. For dessert, there's the traditional rugulach and halvah matched with red velvet cake and key lime squares.

"Our name carries us only so far in extending our catering menu, we must attend to a million of minute details that make people feel good about the food from Stage Deli," Goldberg said. "We take your basic comfort food and kick it up a notch."