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DELI-CIOUS DELI WON'T LET ANYTHING STOP IT

By yomag (<http://theyomag.com/index.php/author/yomag/>) / May 12, 2020

By Aileen Blaine

Tucked away in an unassuming plaza in Liberty, Ohio, Kravitz Delicatessen is known to be something of a hidden gem behind its humble tiled exterior. It's a tiny deli, but it holds nothing back.

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Inside, there are glass cases displaying loaves of bread, stacks of bagels, bricks of cheese and trays of pastries. It has shiny metal stools and a step-back-in-time diner style, gleaming with rustic charm. The menu, with specials that change each day and the specialties that change with the season, are written in brightly colored chalk on a blackboard on the wall. The corned beef and cabbage sandwich is to die for, and the bagels are arguably the best. The holiday options, whether it be for Saint Patrick's Day, Passover or Mother's Day, are always a hit.

And despite these trying times, Kravitz Deli is still managing to stay afloat.

It's no stranger to adversity. In 1939, Rose Kravitz established her deli on Elm Street in Youngstown's North Side. The area was reaching the end of the Great Depression, and Kravitz opened the tiny business to sell kosher meats to families on their way home from synagogue.

Over the next 30 years, its popularity would grow, and by 1970 Kravitz decided to move from North Side to its current Belmont Avenue location to better suit the needs of suburban migration. It would become more than just a deli, evolving into a restaurant and bakery. There it has weathered some tough times, like Black Monday in 1977 and the Great Recession of 2008.

Now, Rose Kravitz's son Jack Kravitz proudly owns and runs the business, and he's a frequent face behind the counter. With apron on, he's constantly on the move, ringing up customers and serving up orders. He's always smiling from beneath his baseball cap, ready for anything.

Just a few weeks ago, however, he wasn't smiling quite so much.

Uncertainty loomed with COVID-19 closing in on the area. State restrictions on businesses like restaurants, in order to slow the spread of the coronavirus, were enacted right before Saint Patrick's Day. Jack Kravitz made the tough decision to close shop, not knowing if the decision would mean his deli days were over.

"I was overwhelmed," he said.

Even now, you can see that the uncertainty of the past month has left him a little shaken. His predicament wasn't his alone because restaurants across the nation have been facing the same tough decisions.

"But," he continued, "the outpouring of support from the community was heartwarming and will not be forgotten."

After some careful consideration, he ultimately decided to open the deli for delivery or takeout orders only. While the menu might be a little limited, it's for good reason. He says that it's so his employees can maintain the recommended 6-foot social distance at their workstations.

Shortly after the stay-at-home order was issued for the state of Ohio, Jack Kravitz and his staff began what they deemed the "Rueben Rescue." As a way of thanking hospital workers and first responders in the Mahoning Valley, the deli donated more than two hundred corned beef and cabbage dinners.

A saying goes, "It might not be much, but it's honest work." Jack Kravitz's work means a lot to the community, and it's honest, too.



Kravitz Delicatessen's Reuben sandwich served with Long Island dressing. / Photo by Michael Rutushin

The community is grateful for Jack Kravitz and his efforts. There has been a fairly consistent flow of orders, not just because the food is good, but also because the regulars are happy to support him and his business. It helps that he is taking the pandemic seriously and is keeping the best interests of his staff at the forefront of his mind.

For much of the community, there's something to be said for Kravitz's atmosphere. Walking through the door, it feels like walking into a different time, with the dark green booth seats and stools and cream-colored tabletops and floor tiles. The framed photos on the walls showcase the pride Jack Kravitz has for his business and its history. The photos also serve as memoriam for his mother, who died in 2011.

For many, Kravitz Deli is a longtime family favorite, and for others, it's a hidden gem stumbled upon while waiting for car repairs at the neighboring AutoZone. Even Dr. Amy Acton, the director of the Ohio Department of Health and a native to the area, is a fan of the deli.

It's undeniable that the past month has been difficult. To say that things will be easy in the near future might be wishful thinking, but the things that matter, like the heart and soul that Jack Kravitz has put into his business and the food served, have withstood the test of time.

If you go to Kravitz Deli, it's imperative that you try a bagel. Go out on a limb and get a corned beef sandwich, or venture with a Rueben or its coleslaw cousin, the Northside. You probably won't regret it.

Maybe give Jack Kravitz a little wave, or take a gander at the photos on the wall. You might just find that it's one of your new favorite places to go.

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