

DAIRY JOY, A HINCKLEY TRADITION, FOR SIXTY YEARS

— Sandy Conrad
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New Dairy Joy owners Mike Greutman and Zach Ruh have completely remodeled and updated the restaurant at 436 E Lincoln Avenue (Route 30) in Hinckley (815/286-7701).

When Zach was in high school in the Hinckley/Big Rock area, he dreamed of owning the Dairy Joy Drive-in which gave him his very first job in 1994. He worked for the Wahlgrens who owned the local landmark at the time. Over the years he kept in touch with his old bosses and filled in when needed from time to time. In the meantime, he met Mike who shared a passion for the food business and liked the charm of a small town community. Just when Mr Wahlgren was looking for a buyer for Dairy Joy, Mike and Zach decided they wanted to own it and a deal was struck in April of 2016. In 60 years, the restaurant has only had five owners including them.

Zach may have had a long relationship with Dairy Joy, but Mike has been in the food industry since the age of 16. He has managed restaurants in the Chicago area and was general manager of Fireside Grill in Sugar Grove (where he met Zach). He is also a real estate broker, something he does in his “spare time.” He handles the business side of the drive in and calls Zach the face of Dairy Joy. “People come up to me all the time and tell me they are so glad it was bought by somebody from the area who would carry on the tradition,” says Zach. One customer said “thanks for taking me back to my high school days!”



The atmosphere at Dairy Joy is pure 1950’s. It has always had a close relationship with the local high school from which many employees come; some have been there for almost 15 years! The owners are planning special events for the elementary school, a back to school bash and a day when teachers will serve food to the students. Sports teams in the area always stop by after games.

A new event that started this month is “Cruise Nights,” inviting customers to show their favorite set of wheels in the parking lot. Employees will pick their favorite car and the owner will get a prize. Future dates are July 6 and August 3 from 6 – 9 PM. There will be 50’s music and other specials for those who come. “We’re also going to have a day to honor American Farmers and get the locals to bring out their vintage tractors,” adds Zach.



No restaurant lasts for 60 years if the food isn’t good. The menu includes Burgers and Fries cooked to order, Hot Dogs (Regular, Corn or Chili); the Italian and BBQ Beef, Cole Slaw and Potato Salad are all homemade and the Fried Chicken is a specialty (spicy wings, or by the piece, 2 – 24). There is also Fish & Chips, a Shrimp or Country Cod Basket, and a Seafood Special. Plus Fish, Chicken, Italian or Polish Sausage, Hot Ham & Cheese, Roast, Italian or BBQ Beef and Grilled Chicken Sandwiches, Pizza or Taco Puffs, Salads and Mexican dishes. Sides include Baked Potatoes with Butter, Cheese, Sour Cream, Broccoli, Bacon, Chili or BBQ, French Fries, Mozzarella Sticks, Nachos, Cheese Balls, Mushrooms, Onion Rings, Chili, Soup or Biscuits.

Ice Cream creations include Cones, Arctic Swirls, Freezes, Floats, Sodas, Bostons, Shakes, Malts, 7 varieties of Banana Splits and 9 varieties of Sundaes. Vanilla, Chocolate or Twist Ice Cream to go is available in pints, quarts or half gallons.

Patrons can choose from indoor or outdoor patio dining or pick-up from the walk-up window of orders placed online at orderdairyjoy.com.

Summer hours are 11 AM to 9 PM daily. Dairy Joy closes from Veteran’s Day in November to early March. Check out their money saving coupon in this issue.