

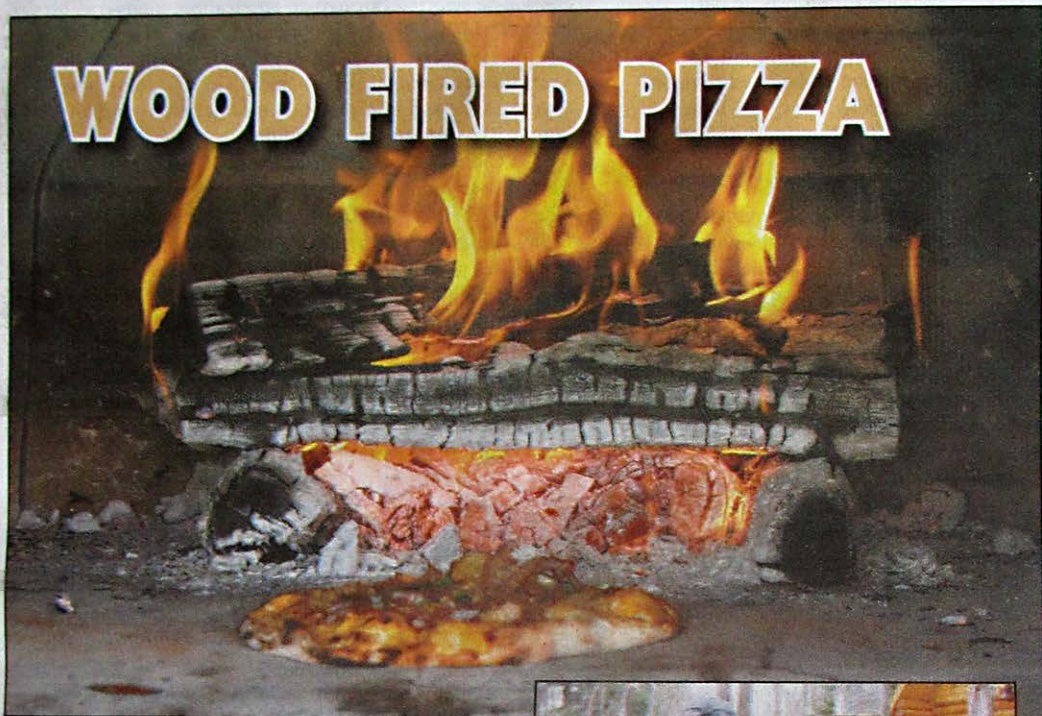
Shining a positive light on our communities

VOYAGEUR PRESS

April 14, 2015

The Voyageur Press of McGregor serves the School Districts of McGregor, F

WOOD FIRED PIZZA



“Dinner and a show”

BY JIM HAWLEY
Contributing Writer

MCGREGOR, Minn.—What do you get when you order a pizza from Rick Herman of Log Home Wood Fired Pizza? Per Nancy Herman, maybe not an objective witness, “Dinner and a show,” describing husband Rick’s passion for his pizza creations and his interactions with their customers – particularly the kids. The Hermans will be celebrating their first anniversary in business in June, bringing a unique food offering to the area.

On the surface, it may appear to be an odd equation for success — a career educator and a marketing communications professional venturing into the food hospitality business. Rick spent his first career in education – teacher, principal, superintendent – finding his way to the McGregor area as superintendent in 2006, and ending up with a four-year hitch in Wrenshall from 2008-2012. “I always loved to cook,” shared Rick. “Mom always had us in the kitchen,” he continued.

After Rick’s decision to retire from education, Rick and Nancy were enjoying life in their log home



First anniversary in business; Nancy and Rick Herman display their wood-fire oven on its self-contained trailer.

in the McGregor area. Avid hunters, Rick built a smokehouse in their yard, and they also harvested maple syrup, but there was still something missing. Nancy suggested, “You need to find something to do.” Enticed by his interest in food, Rick looked at, but rejected, investing in a bricks-and-mortar restaurant. “The area had enough of those,” he observed. Via research, he discovered portable wood-fired pizza preparation, and off they went to a Fire Within workshop in Boulder, Colorado. Rick and Nancy

— see **WOOD FIRED** page 2

WOOD FIRED from the front page

put together a business plan, leveraging their respective areas of expertise. They subsequently had a trailer built by Fire Within and took the plunge.

While all this activity was occurring, Nancy continued to operate her 18-year-old business, Yellow River Advertising and Design.

The oven itself is interesting. Taking anywhere from one and one-half to two hours to heat up on a nice, sunny day, they burn oak, maple and poplar – with oak providing the durable heat and poplar providing kindling effect for the fire. When fully warmed up – 900 degrees, the oven can produce a pizza in 90 seconds. The oven can hold 10 eight-inch pizzas, which is what they sell retail. Catered events feature 12-inch pies. Wood-fired appetizers and cold salads are also offered.

Rick developed the menu, and they adopted both an “Up North” theme to their offerings combined with use of local ingredients. Their daughter, Jenni, is credited with taking Rick’s and Nancy’s ideas and developing their logo/business identity and also with helping Rick name the pizzas that he developed. Pizza offerings range from breakfast through dessert. Their most popular offering is the “Hunter” – essentially a pepperoni

pizza. We are in Minnesota, after all. Rick’s favorite is the “Smokehouse” – pulled pork, bacon, cheddar cheese, green onions and barbecue sauce. Nancy was originally lured by the “Evergreen” – spinach, zucchini, roasted peppers, asparagus, green onion, mozzarella/provolone cheese, basil, parmesan cheese, garlic oil; but she has recently embraced “In the Woods” – mozzarella/provolone cheese, asparagus, mushrooms, prosciutto, parmesan cheese, garlic oil.

In their first year, the Hermans established a presence at the Grand Rapids Farmers Market, supplemented by Friday and Sunday presences in McGregor in front of the Paquette building (on the north side of Highway 210 – across the road from Thrifty White and Dave Winegar’s dental office), accompanied by appearances at various community festivals, wedding events and even a fundraiser for parent-teacher conferences in Cohasset.

The couple credited the Colorado workshop for limiting their surprises in the first year of operation. Rick noted that they learned they needed a larger staff to serve the volume of customers they attracted – a good problem if you have to have one. Also, finding a commissary kitchen in which they could prepare

their ingredients was harder than they expected. They were able to establish a relationship with Camp New Hope, which was a win-win solution.

As they prepare for their second season, they already have some graduations, weddings, and private parties booked, and they plan to return to Grand Rapids Farmers Market (scheduled to open Wednesday, May 13), their Friday location in McGregor, and Friday-night events in conjunction with Gilby’s Orchard. The Hermans were excited to share they have been invited to participate in “A Taste of Itasca” Tuesday, May 5 in Grand Rapids. Their goal is to work primarily within a 100-mile radius, but they will extend that range for special events.

They are looking for staff. If you are interested in a part-time, fun opportunity, Rick and Nancy welcome your call.

Rick and Nancy were pleased with the customer reception in their first year, and look forward to an exciting year two. The author got to do some sampling, and is also no longer an objective witness. You really need to try Rick’s unique recipes.

“The future cannot be predicted, but futures can be invented.” — Dennis Gabor, Hungarian-British electrical engineer and physicist



Log Home Wood Fired Pizza