

**Keeping it cozy**

# Restaurateur solicits customers' advice

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

At about 10 a.m. on a Saturday, the regulars are still filling in for their first cup of coffee. In the corner of the Village Mall Cozy Cafe, two customers have managed to embroil eatery owner Don Adams into a debate over their football team's latest defeat.

While the armchair quarterbacks refine the offensive and defensive lines, Adams keeps on preparing the day's quiches and offers occasional asides to the conversation.

It's the type of homespun hospitality that Adams and his wife, Betty, want to characterize their restaurant. Now the couple have added another Cozy Cafe to downtown Farmington. As unobtrusive as the Village Mall location, the Cozy Cafe Blue is tucked back from Grand River near Gilt, next to the Hair Sanctuary.

Like the first restaurant, the new addition is a small crowded room designed to remind customers of Aunt Lilly's dining room during Sunday brunch.

TABLES and chairs compete with each other for floor space. The counter is the focal point of the room. It offers a good vantage point to watch Mrs. Adams bake the day's supply of pies and the afternoon's hearty but inexpensive main dish.

Adams dismisses the idea of renting a larger room for his restaurant. The Village Mall cafe seats 19 persons. The new branch seats 25. That's the way a Cozy Cafe should look, according to Adams. The food, including soups and pies, is made from scratch.

"With the bigger rooms, you can't serve our kind of menu," he said. "We want to keep out homemade menu."

"We want to make this a home atmosphere, not a restaurant."

The emphasis on home is an integral part of the Cozy Cafe philosophy which views the patron as a partner instead of a participant.

"We try to meet three needs," Adams said. "We want to give people a spiritual uplift. Not that we preach to them. But we want them to feel at ease. We want to serve them good

food. And we want them to feel like part of the restaurant."

It works. Patrons are involved in everything from decorating the new cafe to recommending new recipes.

"It's like coming home to visit your mother," Adams said.

At the new cafe, the clock over the cash register gives a homey touch. The china timepiece with the glazed flowers was a homemade present from a customer.

Some of the pies on the counter were once recipes offered by customers. The menu, which changes daily, is influenced by the customers, too.

The Adams' are open to suggestions. A diabetic customer suggests that the cafe serve sugarless pie and Adams promises to get a recipe for it.

Adams started out as a chef for the car ferry to the Upper Peninsula before the Mackinac Bridge was constructed. Eventually, he switched to supporting himself through Northern Michigan University by cooking in the school cafeteria before the Army decided to change his career plans.

Through his cooking experiences he decided he wanted to give his customers wholesome meals.

That attitude found its way into the cafes two years ago, when the Adamses decided to give the restaurant business a try.

MRS. Adams gave up teaching in Novi elementary schools for getting into the cafe at 5 a.m. to start the day's menu.

Adams gave up operating gas stations to fill his long-time dream of owning a restaurant.

Once the cafe was started, the Adamses decided that fried food, liberal use of salt or sugar and a standard menu were out of place in their business.

"We're interested in people health-wise," he said.

That interest has led them to encourage customers to give detailed instructions to the cooks about the proper way to fix their sandwich. Customers can request half of a sandwich or can spill a piece of pie with their friends.

"We encourage it," Adams said. "It goes to serve."

bothers the cooks a little but I just love it. We don't want people to eat too much."

Another touch of home at the cafes is the early morning phone calls from patrons asking for the menu of the day.

"People don't usually do that in a restaurant," Adams adds.

"When you eat dinner at your mother's, you don't know what she's going to serve."



At the Village Mall Cozy Cafe, Betty Adams's daughter Mary gets to run the show in the family's



Cooking the meals he offers at the cafe, Don Adams uses a micro-wave oven and avoids fried foods. (Staff photos by Harry Mauthe)

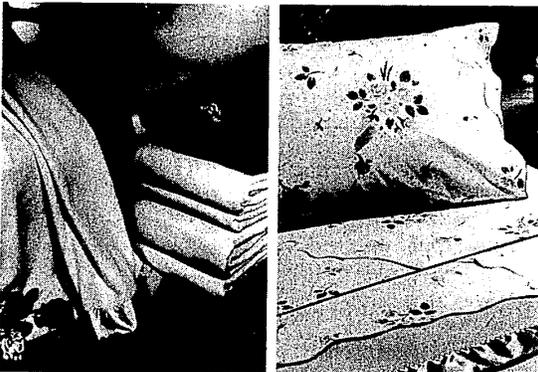


Helpers at the Cozy Cafe's two locations are apt to be young because owner Don Adams enjoys teenagers.



Karin Knoep, 15 (right) and her friend Laura Coleman, 15, take a moment's leisure at the new Cafe.

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