

# The ruler of The Roost knows how to please

BY ALICE RHEIN  
CORRESPONDENT

employee that there's a customer at the ice cream counter.

## MORE THAN FAST FOOD

So in addition to the "grab & go" of fast food places like KFC and Chicken Shack, The Roost has some other comfortable amenities like an ice cream counter that serves Ashby's Sterling ice cream, dine-in service with comfortable seating for 50, a television to carry-out customers won't miss a big play, and a play area just perfect for busy toddlers.

"I wanted a place that would have equal appeal to families, seniors, people with children and the working community," says Bera, who opened The Roost. In September, cutting chicken wire instead of ribbon during the opening ceremony. And there's one other thing that Bera added: "Wonderful customer service."

"I was thrilled to find this place," says Jane Cole, who recently moved to Madison Heights from Hamtramck.

"They seem genuinely happy to see you when you come in. It's not like a fast-food place where you're just a number."

And Cole, who has years of restaurant experience, immediately recognized a difference in quality, too. "It is such a clean restaurant, and you can tell the food is not brought in a truck and microwaved."

## MADE FROM SCRATCH

Indeed, Bera says that everything is made fresh, from the cabbage that's turned into cole slaw to the pellets of real spuds that become delicious "roasted potatoes" or French fries with the help of a cutting machine that can handle 350 pounds of potatoes at a time.

And yes, you can taste the freshness. Every meal is made to order, so there's no sitting under a heat lamp. Chicken is available by the piece or in combo meals, and there are two styles, "roasted" and BBQ.



Owner Sandy Bera, serves up lunch to patrons, Dennis and Shirley Rees.

Salads, shrimp and hamburgers are also featured, and for not much more than \$5, you get quite a satisfying meal.

Oilly, who owned T-Bones Chicken and Ribs in Troy and spent 12 years with the Chicken Shack chain, is the operational mind of the trio. And it's not so much a secret recipe he has for the ribs and chicken, but, as Bera notes, he's built the right formulation for preparing and cooking the food.

"Great care goes into that," says Bera.

And if Oilly is the operational person, and Bera the business guy, then Sandy, Bera's wife of 33 years, is the creative one. An employee of the Troy Chamber of Commerce, Sandy helped create the witty "look" of the Roost, from the choice of warm, sunny colors, to the "buck, buck, buck stops here" sign above the clever bucket lights at the counter. And the "Roostrooms" are certainly among the cleanest in town.

## POPULAR CHOICES

Bera says with less than three months under his belt, he can already see what's most popular. Lunchtime brings in both officer and blue collar workers for cod fillet or a hearty lunch special of chicken, ribs, rolls and potato. The carryout crowd continues to increase, and the audience is starting to expand beyond the boundaries of the city as customers who visit Oakland Mall and other retail stores along busy John R begin to discover the Roost.

Bera talks about his wish to expand to several more locations in the coming year, and, as if on cue, one of his return customers recognizes him sitting at a table.

"Hey, I wondered where you were," he smiles.

## THE ROOST

Location:  
27080 John R (just north of 11 Mile) in Madison Heights

Hours: Open daily at 11 a.m. (248) 541-4150

Details: Catering available

"How did your wife like it?" Bera asks.

"I like it. She likes it. She's going to keep me busy coming up here. You get the best chicken in the whole area," he says.

Another woman waiting in the high-backed chairs designated for carryout customers turns around to look at Bera. "You look a little more tired than the first time I saw you. I think I came when you first opened."

Bera smiles and makes easy conversation with the woman, but the truth is, he's hardly had a dinner anywhere but the Roost since it opened. He

arrives at 8:30 a.m. to open up, and typically is there helping with clean-up at 11 p.m.

"They say 85 percent of restaurants fail. With these odds, I can't afford to hand off to someone else or allow someone else to set the standard for customer service," says Bera. "With so many choices where to spend dollars, why go two to three miles more to get chicken or ribs? That's really what we're up against."

But even while he asks the question, the answer is all around him. People come in, make conversation, get great food, and have a pleasant experience.

"If people come here and feel that it's their place, then I'm pleased," says Bera.

And though it's a long way from the factories and corporate offices of the auto industry, Bera is still looking to do what he witnessed at the Toyota plant many years ago: Provide a reasonably priced quality product that will maintain customer loyalty.

Sounds like the businessman has come home to Roost.

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