

Wagon Wheel pizzeria keeps on rolling

Maria Sonnenberg, For FLORIDA TODAY 5:10 p.m. EDT October 1, 2014



(Photo: Chris Kridler, chris-kridler.com)

Pizzerias come and go in Brevard, but places like Wagon Wheel endure. In fact, the Palm Bay pizzeria opened by brothers Guy and Ken Elwood celebrated 30 years in June.

"In 1988, other interests took my uncle's time, and my parents bought him out, and at that time I became a partner," said Keith Elwood.

"My parents thought by having a "piece of the pie," I would work harder and build the business."

Elwood's parents were right, for the son continued cementing the solid foundation that his dad and uncle started.

"The secret to our success is to consistently give your customers a great product with great service for a fair and reasonable price," said Elwood.

"The key is consistency, so the customer knows what to expect."

Question: What's your history, Keith?

Elwood: I was born in Connecticut and grew up in the small town of Simsbury in the Farmington Valley.

At 17, my parents moved down here to Melbourne and I moved with them. I got a job at Dictaphone in the machine shop and after a short time I quit when I saw more opportunity in the pizza business.

Q: How did you get into the food business?

Elwood: As the story goes, we were in two previous locations in Palm Bay before the golden opportunity to purchase our current location at 1760 Palm Bay Road NE came upon us in 1998.

This location was originally built for a restaurant, so it was a no-brainer to move there.

Q: What makes the place unique?

Elwood: I think it is that we are one of the few mom-and-pop pizza joints that can comfortably serve groups of 20 to 30-plus people and still have room for many other diners.

Q: Where does the name come from?

Elwood: I have no clue, but have been told a pizza is cut like the spokes on a wagon wheel and that's the story I am sticking with.

Q: Are you connected with the Melbourne Wagon Wheel?

Elwood: The Melbourne store is actually the original Wagon Wheel that opened in 1971 by my uncle and another partner. It is presently run by my cousin, also named Keith.

Q: What about all the beer memorabilia?

Elwood: The beer memorabilia is a collection from friends, customers and distributors that gives a uniqueness to the dining experience.

Q: Signature item?

Elwood: I don't know that I could pick one signature item. Obviously, the pizza is our signature and also our strombolis and calzones, but maybe the subs or chicken wings are also signature items.

Q: What is your workday like?

Elwood: I wear many hats in the day-to-day operations of business. I can be found behind the pizza bench, on the phone, on the floor helping customers,

in the back under a sink fixing plumbing or anything else that could possibly need to be done. I think it's called putting out fires. I also do all the behind-the-scenes stuff, like pay bills, order food and the likes.

Q: Family?

Elwood: I have a wonderful wife of 17 years, Marelyn, who is very supportive in my life decisions and is working on a custom cakes business.

I also have two sons, Joshua and David, and one daughter, Karina, and I am very proud of all three, and I have my parents, Guy and Carol Elwood, who I am very thankful for giving me this opportunity.

I also have an extended family of all my staff here at Wagon Wheel.

Q: Three words that describe you?

Elwood: I would say honest, talkative and procrastinating.

Q: Person you'd love to see at Wagon Wheel?

Elwood: I would like to see Guy Fieri from "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives."

Wagon Wheel Pizza

Where: 1760 Palm Bay Road NE, Palm Bay

Call: 321-724-4769

Web: Website is a work-in-progress, but check out [facebook.com/pages/The-Wagon-Wheel-Pizza/111730192195671](https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Wagon-Wheel-Pizza/111730192195671) for up-to-date information.

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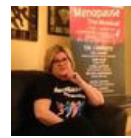


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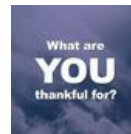
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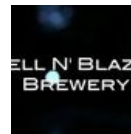
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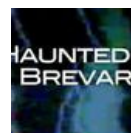
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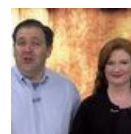
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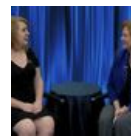
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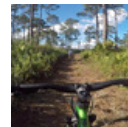
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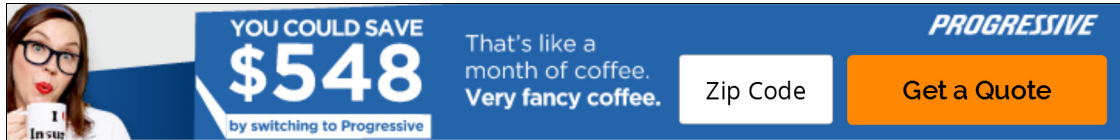
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