



Shawn F. Linenberger/Staff

GAMBINO'S IN TONGANOXIE has been serving up pizza to area customers for nearly 18 years. Most of those years have taken place while operating from the current location on Front Street near Brothers Market just south of East U.S. Highway 24-40.

Popular eatery plugging along with drive-thru, delivery orders

By Shawn F. Linenberger
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It's been nearly 18 years since Ryan Boden opened Gambino's Pizza in Tonganoxie.

The restaurant has been at its current locale along Front Street for most of that time, but started in a space just south of FasTrax convenience store in the retail center at Stone Creek Drive.

In fact, Gambino's hasn't just been part of the Boden family in Tonganoxie. Ryan's brother and sister-in-law own the Eudora Gambino's.

Ryan attributes the restaurant's longevity locally to a few philosophies.

"I think we put our two cents back into the community," he said. "We obviously have a good quality food product. I feel like our service is pretty solid, the majority of it. 'I mean, we're not perfect, but we do our best as far as service goes."

"These things have gotten us to where we're at."

The business has supported local schools and organizations through

fundraisers at the restaurant and provided pizza for school events and other activities.

Earlier during the COVID-19 pandemic, Gambino's served a free drive-thru lunch for Tonganoxie students. They served food to 449 youths that day. The Tonganoxie school district also supplied milk and juice for the event.

Boden also points to local support in making the restaurant a successful part of Tonganoxie.

"It doesn't hurt that we have an awesome community," Ryan said. "You talk about a community that will back things. 'We're pretty fortunate to be in Tonganoxie.'"

He expanded on the sentiment, saying that he and wife, Jamie, feel appreciated as business owners, that the community has their backs as they continue to sponsor events and organizations.

"I've heard of some towns that businesses do that and they don't feel the appreciation that we definitely feel here in Tonganoxie," Ryan said.

The local Gambino's has been offering drive-

thru and delivery since restrictions first started due to the pandemic. As communities have slowly reopened, Gambino's has stayed the course with offering its product with minimal contact.

"We feel like that's the safest thing to do for our customers and our employees," Ryan said. "We're fortunate that we have a drive-thru window, that's for sure."

The restaurant will continue to stay the course with drive-thru and delivery, with plans to open its doors for dine-in when the Bodens "feel good about making a change."

"When that's going to be, I have no idea," Ryan said.

For now, they will continue providing quality food with social distance in mind.

"We appreciate the community support," Ryan said. "We couldn't be more thankful."

"This whole situation hasn't necessarily helped us, but it hasn't hurt us as bad as I was fearful of when I first started."

Gambino's is open for orders 11 a.m.-9 p.m. daily.

Owner at 1866 plans expanded menu, is grateful to be part of local 'family'

By Shawn F. Linenberger
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Next week will mark exactly two years since 1866 Bar and Grill became part of the downtown Tonganoxie landscape at 416 E. Fourth St.

Alberto Yaluk, along with co-owner and head chef Alejandro Lule, started the business on July 16, 2018, but the popular spot has had to adapt in recent months, like most businesses, due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

During that time, Yaluk's restaurant received funds through a local drive to help Tonganoxie businesses. Yaluk was appreciative of the support and proceeded to offer free meals to senior citizens each Monday for several weeks.

"We got food for 500 seniors in a period of five weeks," he said.

That pay-it-forward gesture influenced another.

Longtime local optometrist Richard Dean owns the patio area between 1866 and his former office just to the east that now is an art gallery.

He offered up the space for Yaluk to use for outdoor seating. Now that space is available for both the art gallery and the restaurant.

That space, along with socially distant seating inside the restaurant and additional patio area 1866 has that's accessed from the indoor area, has al-

lowed 1866 to operate at 70% capacity of its normal seating. The only space not being utilized during the pandemic is the private room near the main entrance that in normal times is used for meetings and parties.

"It's been working," Yaluk said. "A lot of people are sitting there (in new patio area) and people seem to like it."

"I just want to say that without the support of the community, we wouldn't be able to survive right now."

That new patio space also has a new addition — a mural. Anita Shikles, whose granddaughter works at 1866 created a mural on the 1866's east exterior wall.

The restaurant continues to maintain proper precautions due to the pandemic.

Yaluk noted that there haven't been too many adjustments because state regulations already require many health and sanitation measures, such as proper glove use when handling food in the kitchen and so on.

He said 1866 recommends that guests wear masks, but it's not mandatory. Yaluk has forged many relationships with his customers and the community in just nearly two years and wants them to feel comfortable and safe when dining inside or picking up food for carryout.

Customers should watch for an expanded

menu that will include some new favorites and a South of the Border selection.

The restaurant has been using social media to promote a special dish most days. Pictures of the savory specials entice customers to call in orders based on the Facebook posts.

"That's the exciting part about the item," Yaluk said.

In addition to some of the menu additions, Yaluk anticipates a broader beverage list as well.

The restaurant is open 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Food enthusiasts can check out specials and other updates on Facebook by searching "1866 Bar and Grill."

Originally from Paraguay, Yaluk also has lived in Nicaragua, North Dakota and Alabama (he graduated from Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Ala., where he earned a degree in marketing) before moving in 2011 to Lawrence. He formerly was manager at LaParilla in Lawrence, a restaurant Lule also owned alongside other Lawrence restaurants.

Yaluk said Tonganoxie has made him feel welcome, as though he's lived here all of his life.

"I couldn't be more happy to be in a town like Tonganoxie where it feels like family, where everyone scratches each others' backs," he said.

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