



Don't sass your granny

By Douglas White

As you enter the city limits of Huntsville on historic "Pig Trail," Arkansas 23, the welcome sign reads "Crossroads of the Ozarks." Indeed, this little town in Madison County is a microcosm of the Ozarks and its culture and beauty, from the breathtaking mountainous backdrop to the nearby meandering War Eagle River and the Southern fried cuisine.

Tracing the history of Huntsville (pop. 1,931), we find two famous natives. Orval Faubus, governor of Arkansas during the desegregation crisis of the late 1950s, grew up here and returned to write his memoirs after his rocky political career ended. Legendary rockabilly pioneer Ronnie Hawkins was born and raised in Huntsville. You may recognize his band, the Hawks, by their other name, The Band, rated by *Rolling Stone* magazine as No. 50 on the list of the publication's most influential artists of all time.

History aside, I came to Huntsville to eat. And if you are in Huntsville and you are hungry, you stop in at Granny's Kitchen. Granny's is co-owned by Kathy Bolinger, aka Granny, and her husband, James, along with their son, James Junior, and his wife, Kari.



An assortment of favorite dishes.

"This restaurant has always been a labor of love for our family," Kathy said. "We opened in 1997 and our customers just keep coming back."

After several visits to Granny's Kitchen, it is easy to see why.



Left: Kathy Bolinger and "Granny" pose with their trademark statue.



Right: Granny's Kitchen, in Huntsville, serves up great home-cooked meals.

The restaurant is "country chic," with tin ceilings and 100-year-old barn wood walls that are adorned by family photos, antiques, deer heads and knick-knacks.

"We serve breakfast, lunch and dinner (three nights a week)," said Kathy. "Everything is homemade, right down to the pie crusts."

Along with the traditional fare, Kathy offers gluten-free dishes as well. That offering came about after James was diagnosed with an allergy to gluten.

"She saved my life!" James said, sitting down to enjoy gluten-free fried chicken.

Now on to the other food. Granny's makes three or four daily lunch specials, and on a recent visit that meant roast beef and mashed potatoes, chicken Parmesan spaghetti, and chicken and dumplings. All three dishes were cooked to perfection, served hot and tasted, well, like your Grandma would make. In other words, the food was fantastic.

The highlight for many of the regulars, though, is Granny's desserts. "Granny" Kathy begins each morning at 6 a.m., starting with her homemade crusts, and bakes between 8-20 pies each day. "We usually run out of some of the favorites during the lunch rush," she said.

Here were the pie choices, dutifully taste tested by your humble scribe, accompanied by a two-word review: apple (elegantly simple), chocolate (decadently sweet), coconut cream (world class), pecan (holiday evoking), chocolate pecan (incredibly good) and

my personal favorite, Reese's (sinfully delicious).

The restaurant's regulars come from across the county, including folks from across the border in Missouri who travel to Granny's just to grab one of the homemade cinnamon rolls that are so big a dinner plate can barely hold them.

Although business is steady, there is no debate as to the restaurant's busiest period. "The ice storm of 2009 was by far our busiest time," Kari recalled.

"We fed the line crews, the National Guard and just about everyone associated with getting the power back on."

It's no secret why Granny's Kitchen has such a loyal following: Family-owned, family-operated, homemade food and a comfortable atmosphere. I would add one other ingredient that makes this a favorite place to dine: Granny. There is something gratifying about seeing the cook herself roaming the restaurant and checking on the customers. It kind of feels like...well, your granny's.

Have a favorite Arkansas eating place for Doug to try?

Write him at doug.white@aecc.com



HOURS

Sun. - Wed.: 6:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Thur. - Sat.: 6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

LOCATION

215 N. Parrot Drive, Huntsville

CONTACT

(479) 738-2838