



Sweet Treats Can't Be Beat

By Doug White

I have a confession to make: I am not a professional food critic. I write this column because I love Arkansas and its people, plus I like to eat. My real expertise, supposedly, is in the area of marketing.

So when we stumbled upon this month's featured restaurant, Sweet Treats Sandwich and Pie Shop in Lamar, I immediately began to think in terms of marketing. Specifically, how does this rather out-of-the-way restaurant have such a vibrant business? I mean, they don't advertise much, don't have a fancy sign nor do they have a website. They are "only" open for lunch and only on weekdays. Not exactly the McDonald's marketing model.

But, oh, what experts they are – both in food and in promotion!

Marie and Greg Heiser started Sweet Treats seven years ago, in the old Lamar post office building, in what can only be described as a labor of love.

"I was an electrical engineer for 19 years and was just burned out," said Greg. "Marie was always an excellent cook, especially baking, and we started catering out of our home. Then, we decided to take the leap, started the restaurant and haven't looked back."

The Heisers are quick with a smile and seem perfectly content. They started their family restaurant with several conditions, including that they limit their offerings to lunch and only on weekdays. "We wanted to maintain a balance with our family," said Marie.

Marie means it. Besides the husband and wife, team Heiser includes Marie's mother, Ann (kitchen assistant), and Greg's mother, Donna (waitress), along with sons Chris and Nick. Three generations working side-by-side serving some of the best home-cooked meals in the state.

Another rule: no frying. The kitchen of Sweet Treats does not contain a fryer, nor does

it contain a grill. "We decided we wanted to make home-cooked meals and we wanted to make them healthy for our customers," Greg said.

Greg handles the entrees and side dishes, which on our Wednesday visit meant smothered steak with mashed potatoes and gravy, corn and yeast roll. The Heisers spend Sunday night planning the weekly meal specials, and then shop each day, buying fresh ingredients. (Send Greg an e-mail and he will send you the weekly specials.)

Among the more popular blue-plates are pork roast, chicken and dressing, oven-baked pork chops, chicken spaghetti, and pinto beans and ham – all cooked from scratch daily. If you just want a salad or a sandwich, try their chef



Marie Heiser cuts a piece of pie.

salad or dictate your special sandwich with choice of bread, meat, cheese and dressing.

With a name like "Sweet Treats," there has to be dessert, right? Oh my yes! Marie begins baking her signature pies from scratch each morning, averaging 15-20 pies every day. During the holiday season, the little restaurant has produced 250 pies in a single day.



We had a slice of six different creations. Let us begin with the chocolate chip pie, which came out of the oven oozing chocolate and topped with milk chocolate chips. It was unbelievably rich and unbelievably delicious.

Moving on there was the coconut crème pie with a three-inch layer of meringue and a standard chocolate pie that was anything but ordinary. Then came two of my personal favorites: first, the strawberry cream cheese pie that was simply stunning. I asked Marie how she made it and she smiled and said, "I can't tell you." (We later learned that Marie has never used a cookbook and does not have a single recipe written down. Everything – everything – is stored in that creative noggin of hers.)

Last, but not least, was the possum pie. No, dear reader, it was not made from possum. Rather this possum pie is a four-layered masterpiece with chocolate, vanilla, whipped cream and pecans, nestled in a homemade crust. Truly amazing.

We finished our meal and watched the lunch crowd slowly subside. I immediately put on my marketing hat and was envisioning all the ways the Heisers could increase business – a bigger building, a billboard just before exit 64 on Interstate 40, a fancy website, a new neon sign, etc.

And then I realized they didn't need any of those things. They are already successful by any measure. And they are happy. What a nice combination. Kind of like a home-cooked meal and a piece of fresh pie.

Sweet Treats Sandwich and Pie Shop is located 3 miles off the Interstate 40 Lamar exit at 5 West Main St. Call Marie or Greg at 479.647.0133 or e-mail at glheiser@hughes.net. The restaurant is open weekdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and they also cater. •