

HEADLINE: Where Food is a Family Affair

The Fox family is bigger than its immediate members. It extends to the community at large, to kids given a leg up on getting a first job, to the scads of high chairs and booster seats kept readily available for hungry youngsters. Though Fox's establishments might feature menus filled with mouthwatering fare, there's one thing you won't find in print that underlies everything this family-owned business does: a philosophy of quality that's not limited to the cuisine.

Over 50 years have passed since Tom Fox, Sr. thought, "it seems like a good investment" when propositioned by a local Beverly deli owner to buy her business. His wife Therese agreed, they moved in, and what began as trading pizzas for sandwiches with Al Capone's sister Mae—yes, *that* Al Capone— became a hard-won Fox family legacy.

But as anyone who's ever heard restaurant statistics knows, most fail within their first year. Determined that what he was building for his family wouldn't follow that path, Fox, Sr. doubled down, literally, working as an electrician 20 hours a week, spending afternoons selling cars, and filling out his evenings helping Therese run the new business which kept the deli they'd acquired operating in back and their established carryout pizza shop up front. It was at this busy Western Avenue location that the Foxes decided to take another gamble and fill a niche close to their hearts in the Chicago area by transforming their business into an Irish American restaurant. So long deli, hello Fox's Restaurant & Pub.

With the transition from pizza and deli joint to authentic Irish pub, the Foxes needed one fundamental: a liquor license. Once their landlord finally allowed them to obtain one, things moved quickly. The pub concept was a popular one and business exploded. Within five years, the patriarch was ready to quit his part time jobs and focus on growing the family business even further. What began with the Beverly pub soon expanded to Fox's Oak Lawn after Fox, Sr. bought out the German Kitchen Restaurant in 1971. Two years later, expansion came again in the form of Fox's Orland Park, which would be operated by Fox, Sr.'s brother Ronald, a recently Air Force retiree. Now, the majority of the Fox family was involved in the day-to-day of running the businesses, from the two Fox brothers and Therese to Tom and Therese's sons Tom, Jr. and Frank as well as daughters-in-law Pamela and Meg.

Looking to add something else to the area's restaurant scene, Fox, Sr. embarked on another in his career as a restaurateur: Fox's Beaten Path. Coining this Lemont-area theme restaurant his "million-dollar mistake," the restaurateur learned from the losses of an economic period that took its toll on interest rates, jobs and overall morale. But as the Foxes have proven time and again, a little adversity never hurt anyone, and it certainly wouldn't be the end of them.

The next Fox venture located in Garfield Ridge was modeled after the concept of their initial carryout pizza business, the Beverly Pizza Shop on Walden Parkway. Now, with four popular businesses under the Fox family umbrella, yearly revenues were topping \$9 million. Finally, this down-to-earth family was reaping the benefits of their tireless work. So, if you're a Fox and find yourself in this position, what do you do? Pay it forward, naturally.

Not just providing a family-friendly environment in their restaurants but also walking the proverbial walk, Fox's became known as a neighborhood place where kids could land their first jobs and where folks down on their luck could work for a second chance. Even now, many fondly recall their time at Fox's, and the way Tom and Therese shepherded kids toward dreams of college as they learned how much their work was worth. Pat Ouimet, a 35-year-old lawyer—and, coincidentally, one of those hardworking high schoolers—recounts: "Working at Fox's was almost like having a barbecue all the time with friends and neighbors...if any kid needed help or money or advice, Tom and Therese would be there."

It's hard not to get noticed when you've engineered one of the longest continually operating, family-friendly restaurant brands in the area, which is why it came as no surprise when the Illinois Restaurant Association selected Fox's as one of 13 out of 2,200 members noted for longevity and outstanding service.

Though Fox, Sr. and Therese have passed, the family legacy curated for Tom, Jr. and Frank carries on. Beverly, Oaklawn and Plainfield locations each offer the quality cuisine the Fox's brand is known for, and the Fox's family of businesses has expanded its services over the years, offering catering for all occasions as well as banquet service. As the family business points brightly toward the future, it's no stretch to say that Tom and Therese would be proud.