

OZAUKEE COUNTY TOURISM

Raising a glass to some of Ozaukee's elite restaurateurs

Editor's note: this is the second on a two-part series on celebrating women in tourism

Women's History Month was established in 1987 to celebrate the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society. Restaurants have always played an essential role in the economic, social and artistic life of a thriving society. They remain at the heart of American life — small businesses dedicated not just to providing food and drink, but to fueling our local economies, employing local residents and fulfilling the basic human need for connection.

In honor of Women's History Month, the Ozaukee County Tourism Board was asked to share the stories of a few of the women strengthening our neighborhoods and shaping our communities through their very local businesses.

Barkha Daily has been successful establishing three outstanding restaurants and bar locations in Thiensville. She opened the cheel, a popular and unique restaurant and art deco bar, in 2014; the baaree, an outdoor patio bar serving food



Daily

and featuring entertainment, in 2018; and the Daily Taco & Cantina in 2020.

Daily was motivated to open the cheel because she wanted to bring unique foods from different cultures to the eager and receptive diners in the area. Nepalese and Himalayan fare were featured on the menu, and the cheel quickly grew into a destination restaurant. Daily continued her mission of offering a special experience with authentic food from other cultures with each of the businesses she launched.

Daily finds it particularly rewarding when she sees

delighted guests' eyebrows raise, indicating a newfound appreciation of food that is outside of their regular diet. She is proud that she and her family have been able to provide memorable experiences that can't be found anywhere else. She also delights in seeing her team members learn and grow within the restaurant, or following and achieving their dreams outside of it.

Daily's hardest time and biggest challenge was when her restaurant, the cheel, burned down in November of 2020 just as she was establishing Daily Taco & Cantina. The restaurant was in a restored historic building that Daily and her husband Jesse had renovated. She said the hardest part of the fire was the impact the loss of the business had on her employees. Her strength and perseverance are evident as the cheel is in the process of being rebuilt.

If you have ever visited downtown Grafton, you have driven by — and hopefully visited — John's Pizzeria, located at the north edge of the Lumberyard. **Katie Parchim** started working at John's Pizzeria in Port Washington 45 years ago alongside her father and



Submitted photo

Katie Parchim, second from right, in the kitchen of John's Pizzeria, surrounded by Zach Onan, Becca Weber and her daughter Keala Sullivan, right.

stepmother, and now owns their second location in Grafton.

Parchim has immersed herself in the community and has become incredibly involved in the outdoor summer concerts, Giro d' Grafton and Ladies Night Out.

Parchim pointed out that her greatest joy is the people she has met on her journey.

"So many wonderful people," she exclaimed. "In some cases, we are blessed to have the fourth generation of an Ozaukee County family coming through our restaurant."

Parchim mentioned two recessions and COVID as some of her greatest challenges at John's Pizzeria, as they were not only hard for business but for her personnel.

"Everyone struggled during these times," she explained. "Our restaurant was hit hard but so were so many other families. The stories are heartbreaking."

Amy Ferrante-Gollwitzer is the owner and operator of Ferrante's Restaurant & Signature Catering. The cozy neighborhood restaurant located in Mequon was established in 1977, although Ferrante's, a family-owned business, has been serving southeastern Wisconsin for more than 100 years. The popular restaurant serves delicious Italian American food and more.

The business has flourished under her management. She added to the business by offering extensive, amazing catering services.

Ferrante-Gollwitzer said she took over the family business primarily because her grandmother and mother expected it. Her greatest success so far was the addition of catering services. Like many restaurants her greatest challenge was navigating through the COVID



Ferrante-Gollwitzer

shutdown.

Dee Zeqiri and her husband Terry put months of hard work into the Luxembourg Café in Belgium, transforming it into a modern, clean, welcoming atmosphere. Despite opening during the height of the pandemic in 2021, they found immediate success, wowing guests with their broad, mouth-watering menu, consistently delicious food, and friendly service.

Zeqiri is incredibly hard-working but always takes the time to give her guests a warm smile and make sure they know she is genuinely happy to see them. It is clear from the impact she has had in the small community of Belgium that the feeling is mutual.

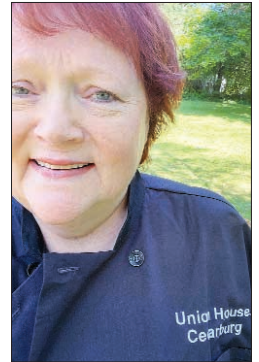
You'll be hard pressed to find a harder working woman than Cedarburg's **BJ Homayouni**. Before retiring from Festivals of Cedarburg last year, Homayouni was juggling three jobs — as executive director of Festivals, as an adjunct professor teaching event management and hospitality courses at Concordia University and as owner of the Union House Cedarburg.

Handing over the Festivals of Cedarburg reins didn't make Homayouni any less busy. She still teaches several classes a semester at Concordia, and then spends afternoons and evenings —

often late evenings — in the kitchen at the Union House, where she and her husband Payman share the duties as head chef in their family business.

Where once she was coordinating giant pumpkin boat races and navigating the busy streets of Cedarburg on a moped, Homayouni is now spending her days perusing food trends and trying out recipes on friends and family members.

"Before we opened the Union House, I thought restaurants found their 'thing' and that was it, they were set," Homayouni said. "But like any tourism-related business, restaurants have to stay fresh and evolve. Even if our customers don't get bored with our offerings, sometimes we do. So we're always trying new things — introducing new small plates, or adding new craft cocktails that our bartenders build from fresh ingredients, right down to making our own sodas and seltzers. Every time a customer walks in — whether they are a regular or they've never been here before — we want them to discover some-



Homayouni

thing new."

In honor of Women's History Month, please help us celebrate these and the other women in our county who contribute to the growth and development of tourism.

For information on tourism in Ozaukee County, go to www.ozaukee-tourism.com and follow the Ozaukee County Tourism Facebook page. On behalf of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, thank you for helping to make Ozaukee County a wonderful place for all to live, work and visit.



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