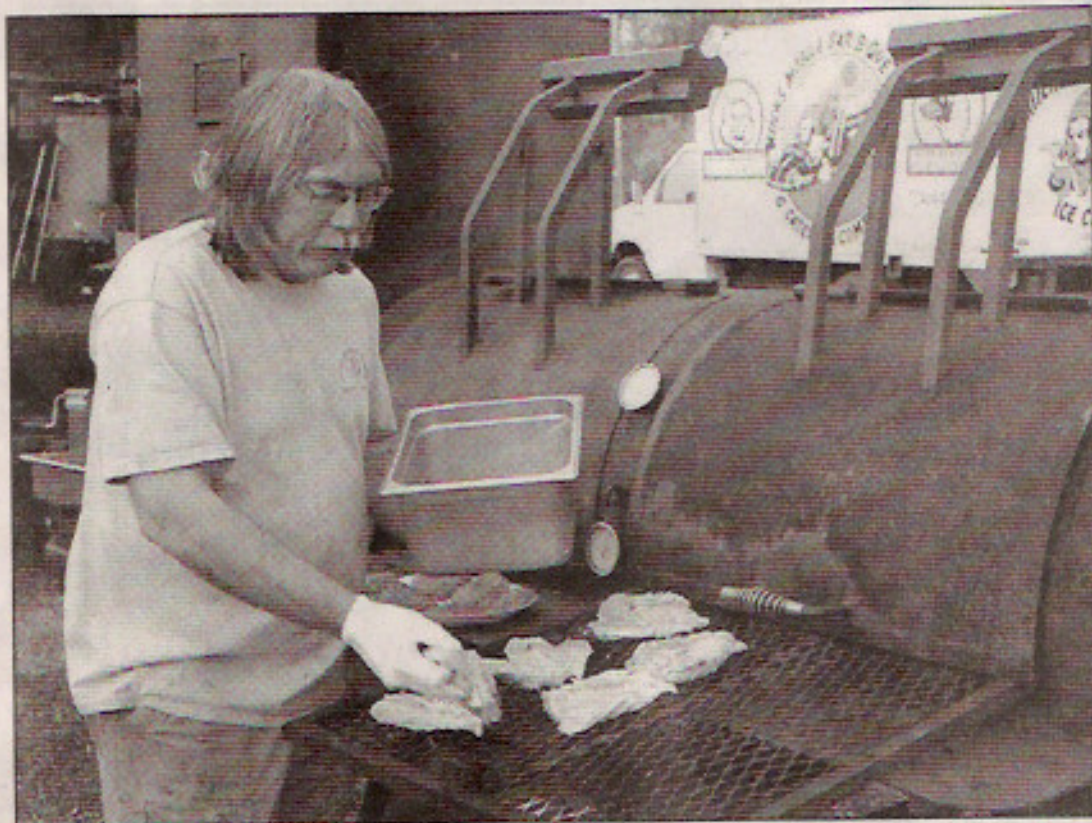


DINING OUT



The sauces that drench the ribs and chicken at Mitch's Barbecue are all home made by owner Mitch Evanitsky (left). The sauces include such selections as buffalo, Texas red, chile, yellow poison and cajun.

Mitch's Barbecue famous throughout North for authentic wood-fired flavor

By Andrea L. Zrimsek

Staff Writer

When Mitch Evanitsky began making homemade barbecue sauce and buffalo sauce in the 1980s, he had no idea it would alter the course of his life.

He was just doing it because he liked to barbecue outside on his grill.

Then, in the early 1990s, while operating an ice cream shop at the corner of Babcock Boulevard and Rochester Road in Ross Township, he bought a mobile barbecue pit and began doing a little grilling in front of the shop, selling food to passers-by.

The fresh, smoky food was an instant hit with his regular ice cream fans and drew in a whole new customer base as well.

He began going to rib cook-offs where he learned the business of barbecue and tasted what other grillers had to offer.

After just one year of cooking up his own smoky meats and side dishes, he



Most people know Mitch's Barbecue through his catering business, but this fall, his signature grilled cuisine will be available at a sit-down restaurant.

dishes, all made fresh by Evanitsky.

"Having someone come in with all the food, side dishes and condiments leaves time for the party host to have fun with their guests instead of standing over the grill cooking all day," he says.

In 1998, he moved his ice cream shop

lons of homemade buffalo sauce each week in the summer.

In fact, his fare is so sought after he has decided to not limit it to only those who attend his catering jobs.

So he is currently remodeling a building along Route 19 in Marshall Township to be Mitchell's Hardwood

won "best sauce" at the Three Rivers Stadium rib cook-off.

Then one day, a couple stopped by his shop and asked a question that would lead Evanitsky down a whole new career path.

"They asked me if I could cater a party for 180 people," he says.

It was quite different from firing up a barbecue pit outside his ice cream shop and selling whatever he grilled, but he did it.

And despite being over prepared and getting there far too early, the event was a success and everyone left with a full belly.

So Evanitsky decided to test the waters and took out a small catering advertisement. He ended up with half a dozen more jobs that year.

The following year, 1996, he did about 10 catering jobs and was featured on the "Ice Cream Show" with WQED's Rick Sebak.

"That's when I got serious," he says.

Instead of renting trucks on an as needed basis, in 1997 he bought his first truck and catered a couple dozen jobs.

Suddenly, everything from weddings and graduations to corporate parties and birthdays were featuring tasty ribs, burgers, chicken and an array of side

and barbecue catering services from their current location on Middle Road in Gibsonia.

He continued making a wide variety of ice cream flavors during the summer months, and also began focusing his time on developing his catering business year 'round.

By 2000, he bought a second truck and 20-foot barbecue pit complete with turkey smoker and was catering 100 jobs a year. Some as small as a few dozen people and one as large as 10,000.

Meat selections on the menu — in addition to the signature barbecue ribs — include everything from pried rib and filet mignon to orange roughly and hot sausage.

Sides include things like fruit salad, sautéed potatoes, veggie kabobs, pasta alfredo and rice pilaf, to name just a few.

Evanitsky feels his success is due to the freshness of his food.

Everything down to the cole slaw dressing and salsa are made fresh by his own hands, and his meats all have that pink ring that means they are smoked to perfection.

Evanitsky's mobile kitchen has earned him fans all over the Pittsburgh area and he says he easily uses 15 gal-

lons of barbecue.

The new eatery is expected to open this fall and will have indoor and outdoor seating.

The menu will include an array of wood-fired ribs, beef and chicken, well as the homemade ice cream flavors that got Evanitsky into the food industry in the first place.

Once open, he will close up his Middle Road location and operate his catering business from the new site.

Though his career as a barbecue master was quite unexpected, Evanitsky says he enjoys working on the side and meeting different people at each job.

And, he does not mind that his gigantic barbecue pit is often the center of attention.

If you are going ...

Mitch's Mobile Barbecue and Ice Cream Shop is located at 4988 Middle Road, in Wagners Plaza, in Gibsonia.

The new restaurant location, scheduled to open this fall, will be at 160 Perry Highway in Ross.

For more information, include catering prices, visit Mitch's Web site at www.mitchsbarbecue.com or call 724-449-2733.