



Sauce Italian Grill & Pub

JUST LIKE EVERY DISH SERVED, DAVE HORSTMAN'S DOWNTOWN ADRIAN RESTAURANT WAS BUILT FROM SCRATCH

Photos and Story by Phil Eich, Storyville Social, as part of the Michigan Main Street Story Series

I had been in the golf business my entire life when a decision was made to cut wages. I didn't quit right then, but I did decide that I was done working for other people and set off to find something to do. But honestly, both my wife Kim and I had no idea what we were going to do.

Then we found this building.

It was in foreclosure, and even though we didn't know what to do with it, we put in an offer. We didn't think it would even be considered...and got the call the next day that it was accepted.

We talked about opening a restaurant because every time we got in the car to go out, we went through the same back-and-forth everybody goes through of deciding where to

eat. My wife's Italian, so we decided to open a nice Italian restaurant, put together a business plan, went to the bank, got a loan, gutted the entire place - filling 11 thirty-yard dumpsters - and had a contractor come in and do the build for us.

Every order we've sent out for the past 12 years here at Sauce has been made to order. There's nothing pre-packaged or scooped out of a bag: everything is prepared from scratch using old family recipes —and the story of the recipes is a story all by itself.

My wife had previously helped a family from Sicily who had moved here and opened a restaurant. When we were considering opening our own restaurant, my wife realized that we couldn't do it alone.

We needed help.

So she reached out to Vince, Joe, and Tony, the same family she had assisted years ago, and they said they were more than willing to repay the debt of gratitude. Tony, a skilled chef, came to help us get started and initially, he planned to stay for about six weeks. But he ended up staying for five months! He loved what we were trying to do and wanted to make sure we were successful.

I must say, our opening night was one we will never forget. Word had gotten out, and we were so busy that at the end of the night, while Tony was saying, 'This is great! This is so much fun!', my wife and I were thinking, 'What have we gotten ourselves into?!'

But it's funny: even though we are much busier now than when we opened, today we find ourselves repeating what Tony said, 'This is great! This is so much fun!'

It's been 12 years and we still absolutely love it, and we love it because of the people. To this day, I still walk around every night and talk to the people at every table.

For me, Adrian is one of the best small towns to live in. We're close to Ohio, Toledo, Ann Arbor, and Detroit, yet we're small enough to be an intimate community. I can get to know my customers. Thirteen years ago when we bought the building, you could have shot a cannon down Main Street; the downtown area was quiet, almost like a ghost town. I remember sitting out in front of the restaurant and wondering if anyone would ever come. It felt like there was



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no traffic at all. However, things started to change when they turned Main Street into a two-way street. Suddenly, there was a noticeable increase in the number of cars passing by, and it was an exciting moment to witness the revitalization of the downtown area.

I genuinely love Adrian. Although I wasn't born here, I have been a part of this community since 1980 and we raised our kids here. The town has its unique charm and character, and it's a wonderful place to call home.

—Dave Horstman of Sauce Italian Grill & Pub, Adrian, Michigan



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