





By BRENNA GRITEMAN LIFE EDITOR Debbie Cooper is fully aware that her restaurant is as famous for its margaritas as it is for the food that she herself cooks.

And she's got no problem with that reputation at all.

"I would say that three-quarters of our customers are here for the margaritas. That's what people know us for: 'Let's go to Oler's and get a margarita."

With National Margarita Day fast approaching on Feb. 22, the Mexican restaurant is sure to be serving up these refreshing, tequila-laced cocktails by the pitcherful.

And that's on top of the 36 to 48 gallons of margaritas Oler's customers already consume in a week.

The most popular version is Oler's

original lime margarita, served on the rocks with a salt rim. It's made from tequila and triple sec (orange-flavored liqueur), of course, but Cooper is tightlipped about any of its otherwise "secret ingredients."

The other top-selling margarita isn't even on the menu — it's just a bit of local lore that those in the know call a "Red Eye." The locally famous concoction is Oler's traditional lime margarita with a "dash" of strawberry margarita to help sweeten the sting. The restaurant's "Black Eye" is the same concept but with blackberry, and the "Pink Eye" features an even slighter dash of strawberry.

"People just know to ask," Cooper says

Continued on pg. 3



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(419) 420-0074 FINDLAYMEDSPA.COM of the many-hued variations. "It's just something we started. And we just started calling it a 'Red Eye."

Dale Mills of Arlington says the homespun cocktail is his happy hour beverage of choice. The 30-year Oler's regular says he frequents the restaurant for the friendship and for the "best margaritas in town" specifically, the "Red Eye."

Matt Slough, formerly of Findlay and now living in the Philippines, concurs. He says whenever he makes it back to his hometown, Oler's — along with its traditional lime margarita on the rocks — is a must.

He likes that the cocktail is perfectly plain and simple, without the sugary additives other places rely on. "This is just the lime and the tequila," he says, noting how the salt rim perfectly counterbalances the sweet and sour flavors within.

For those who prefer their margaritas frozen, Oler's offers a rainbow of options: lime, strawberry, raspberry, pomegranate, blackberry, peach, mango, etc. The blended concoction is less popular among the happy hour crowd that gathers for dollar-off margaritas from 2-6 p.m. daily, but is popular among large groups of diners. Bartender Shanna Coy says it's not uncommon for everyone at the table to order a different flavor, then pass their frozen mixtures around for a colorful, group taste test.

Across town at Mi Tequila, owner



Photos by Randy Roberts

Oler's bartender, Shanna Coy, serves a margarita on the rocks with salt.

Roman Zarazua Rubio reports the lemon-lime-flavored house margarita, served on the rocks with a salt rim, is the beverage of choice.

He estimates that about 4 in 10 customers order some variety of margarita, be it the house special or any number of flavored, frozen offerings.

But while he agrees that the frozen beverages offer a nice array of choices — mango, strawberry, peach and so on — he also feels their merits are lacking: "When it's frozen, basically you freeze your brain and you lose the flavor of the honey and the tequila."

And tequila, of course, is the most

important part.

"To order a margarita without tequila is like to order a hamburger without the patty," Rubio says.

Lucy Munoz of La Charrita says definitively that the margarita is the most frequently ordered beverage at the Findlay restaurant, topping even beer.

She goes so far as to estimate that as many as 7 or 8 out of 10 customers request one.

And while frozen flavor options abound, it should come as no surprise that here, too, the original lemon flavor on the rocks is the margarita of choice.



Matt Slough enjoys a traditional margarita at Oler's.

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Humans of Findlay is a documentary project based on the blog "Humans of New York." The project was created to introduce many of the unique people of Findlay, Ohio. The man behind the lens and the project is Dave Morrow. Morrow has interviewed over 700 people of Findlay, ranging from age 5 to 102 years old, with a wide range of diversity and backgrounds.

On April 4, 2018, a proclamation was signed by Mayor Lydia Mihalik designating the day as "Humans of Findlay Day." Each of the stories have been read up to 30,000 times, and can be located on humansoffindlay.com, Humans of Findlay Facebook page, as well as in this monthly magazine. Know someone that you feel should be featured? Send a nomination on the Facebook page.

JOHN & RHONDA FIRESTONE

John and Rhonda Firestone have been nominated several times for their caring customer service, their treatment of veterans and their work ethic.

They have been a dynamic duo since 1978 when they started working together in the automotive repair industry. They have worked at three different locations over the years and always as a team. They joke that when they go home, there is nothing to talk about because they have shared each day together.

They married in 1985 and have three grown children, one son and two daughters. They also have two grandchildren.

They are best known for their work at their Tuffy auto repair shop on Tiffin Avenue which they have owned for 11 years. It was on a vacation break that John was inspired to see what his options were to work for himself and he found this franchise up for sale. He took over the operation and immediately the customers followed John and Rhonda. They turned the shop into a Franchise of the Year in 2010. They were also recognized by Advanced Auto as the "Good Customer Home Town Hero" service recipient in 2010 for their work locally and with other



local businesses. They love their customers, know most by name, and treat them like family according to nominations and customer feedback.

They give a lot of credit to their long-term employees who give John and Rhonda a peace of mind that the work will be done well.

The Firestones are strong supporters of veterans and of Honor Flight. "We have great opportunities and freedoms because of our veterans." When numerous flags were sliced and vandalized several years ago, it was the Firestones who stepped up and replaced them as part of their contribution to being residents of Flag City.

They work 10-hour days, six days a week, but when they can, they love to camp, especially in Florida. Rhonda said she is a sports nut and follows baseball and Nascar.

Thank you for your service to Findlayites and our veterans.



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Valentine's Day Dates

Getting dressed to the nines, having dinner at a dimly lit table for two with a single rose in the vase on the table while a local musician plays guitar in the corner and sharing a single decadent slice of chocolate cake seems like the pictureperfect Valentine's Day — so why not stick with what works?

For people who love the traditions of this mid-winter holiday, there are plenty of ways to celebrate.

DINNER AND DANCING Go traditional! Make a reservation at the most romantic restaurant around and enjoy fancy food, champagne and ordering appetizers and desserts. If there's room in the dining area, dance. Not enough room at the restaurant? Go to a club or find a couple's dance class. **COUPLES MASSAGE** More and more massage therapists are making house calls, so it's possible you and your spouse can relax without having to leave the house. But if you want a more complete getaway, find a local spa and a book a couples massage. If you can take the whole day, get a mani-pedi together before or after the massage.

A NIGHT AWAY You may both have to work on Feb. 14 and



Feb. 15, but even if you can't skip town for the day, book a room at a hotel or a cute little bed-and-breakfast for you and your partner. Enjoy the time away from kids, pets, the floor that needs vacuuming and other responsibilities and just spend time with each other. Order room service and just relax and enjoy each other's company or explore downtown Findlay's nightlife and enjoy live entertainment.

Inexpensive Date Ideas

A small budget for Valentine's Day doesn't mean you need to go small in your planning for fun and romance. It might require a little more creativity or flexibility, but there are many ways to dress up, have dinner by candlelight and exchange thoughtful gifts on Valentine's Day.



STAY HOME Cook dinner together (or get takeout and serve it on your nicest dishes), dim the lights, light a couple of candles, turn the music on low and enjoy a quiet night in. For dessert - dip strawberries in chocolate or decorate cookies or cupcakes together after dinner. Even if you and your spouse aren't much for baking, you can order un-iced treats at your local bakery, The Baker's Cafe. When dinner's over, enjoy a glass of wine and a movie in front of the fireplace. Look through old photo albums of your favorite memories.

CELEBRATE ANOTHER NIGHT

Restaurants and theaters are crowded, and many of the babysitters are spoken for on Valentine's Day. You can avoid the rush by celebrating a couple of days before or after, when it's easier to get a reservation at your favorite restaurant. You could also volunteer to swap babysitting on

Valentine's Day with friends. FIND A NONTRADITIONAL RESTAURANT

If you want to get dressed up and go out on Valentine's Day, do it! Check out the locally owned mom-and-pop restaurants like The Dark Horse that serve great food and offer a smaller, more intimate atmosphere and make a memory. Or, go very non-traditional, go through Wilson's drive-thru for a burger and go for a drive.

GET OUTSIDE Go for a walk. It's a great chance to get exercise and offers a lot of time for the two of you to talk with each other. Take a stroll around your neighborhood or if the weather permits, head to a local park and have a picnic. If the 419 weather does not cooperate, head to the local gym together and enjoy exercising together. This allows for you both to take in a few more calories afterwards for a drink or dessert – or both!

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Unique Dates

Looking for something a little nontraditional for your Valentine's Day? Either to avoid crowds or to mix it up, many couples like to use the holiday of love to try something new, act a little silly or give back.

RECREATE YOUR FIRST DATE Whether it was a year ago or 50 years ago, relive that first time the two of you spent time together as a couple. Go to the same restaurant if you can, rent the first movie you watched or go to the same club. If you're far from the city where you met, find a restaurant with a similar feel or cook the same dishes at home. Dance to the same song in your living room.

VOLUNTEER You can serve meals to the homeless, help your local food bank, volunteer at the Humane Society or work with a local children's charity. Or, you may have a neighbor who's a little lonely. Spend the evening with them talking

and ask if they need any help around the house, yard or errands.

SWAP OUT YOUR WHEELS Do you or your partner have a dream car? Rent it for the night, or take one for a test drive (but don't eat in the car if you're renting a luxury vehicle). If you're feeling extra wild, and have a couple of extra layers, lower the top of the convertible and enjoy the wind in your hair. Or rent a limo for the evening.

GO TO A COOKING CLASS Whether you're a kitchen novice or comfortable in the kitchen but want to learn something new, check out businesses or schools who offer cooking demonstrations. These are



typically done in smaller groups and put you right in front of the chef, who walks you and your date through how to make whatever delicious dish they're cooking up for Valentine's Day. In addition to the demonstration, you'll get dinner. These sometimes include wine tastings as well. It's a fun way to spend time with your date and have fun in the kitchen.

All the Single People

Valentine's Day frequently serves as a reminder to those who aren't in relationships that, well, they're not in relationships. For those who want to be dating or married, it can be a difficult day. If you want to keep it simple, treat it like any mid-February day and don't worry about celebrating. If you want to celebrate, make it fun. Here are a few ideas of how to celebrate solo.



COOK A FANCY MEAL Who says you can't cook a three-course meal for yourself? Make the recipes you've been thinking about cooking but never had time or energy to — cook a nice steak or lobster and make a rich chocolate cake. Or, if you're not much into cooking, pick up from your favorite restaurant and treat yourself at home. **BUY YOURSELF A GIFT** Valentine's Day is a great time to buy a new kitchen accessory, a piece of jewelry or clothing, a new book or something else you've had your eye on. Buy yourself a box of chocolates or even a bouquet of flowers to brighten up your home or

office. **HAVE A PARTY** You can call it an anti-Valentine's Day party and just get together with friends — eat, drink, play games, and if you have a friend with a dog, have them bring Fido, because nothing makes a party more fun than a dog!



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LYNNE & JOHN CAVELAGE

Lynne and John Cavelage, owners of Coffee Amici, which opened its doors in 2002, were nominated for their creating a safe environment for anyone and everyone to come in and feel at home.

Lynne was born in Ottawa and graduated from Ottawa-Glandorf high school in 1979. While active in music in school, playing the trumpet, guitar and singing, she also honed her office skills by mastering typing and taking short-hand. This allowed her to start work at Marathon two weeks after graduation working as a secretary. During her six years there she would work as a secretary in several departments.

During her tenure at Marathon she was introduced to a handsome young accountant named John Cavelage. They would marry in 1984 in Ottawa and setting up home in Findlay. Twins, Tony and Pat, joined the family in March of 1985. Their third child David was born in 1988. They have added two granddaughters and recently a furry goldendoodle named Scarlett to the family.

John's journey began in Lima where he attended and graduated from Lima Central Catholic high school in 1973. He completed dual major degrees in Accounting and Computer Science at THE Ohio State University in 1980. He was hired in 1981 as an accountant, also at Marathon Oil, assigned to the corporate accounting department. When the company began upgrading their mainframe computer systems, John was assigned to be the liaison between accounting and the computer programmers as they developed software internally. John would retire the first time from

Marathon in 2005 after 25 years.

The idea of what eventually became Coffee Amici came to John's mind while on his daily walks around town. As he passed the empty building where Coffee Amici now sits, he envisioned a music venue that would be open to all as there would not be smoking and alcohol allowed. As he and Lynne mulled the idea over, they were advised that they would need something else to draw people in when music wasn't playing. They settled on setting up a coffee house and were assisted by CrimsonCup out of Columbus with purchasing equipment and training. The key thing that was emphasized to them to "create a safe place in the community" that was inclusive to all persons.

John and Lynne have succeeded and just celebrated 16 years of Coffee Amici being the "heartbeat of Findlay" and a place where veteran and beginner musicians could display their talent at Friday night Open Mic. This is being expanded to Saturday afternoons so young students just starting out can present their music and other skills such as poetry reading.

Behind the scenes the coffee shop is very active working with the United Way and numerous other programs that provide services to Findlay's citizens, such as Hope House and City Mission. Lynne is currently president of the FOCUS board and John just joined the NAMI board as the treasurer.

They have succeeded in their initial dream, "to provide a safe place to enjoy music and be welcoming to all."



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