

Doe's Eat Place - An American Classic

Those of us here in the Delta (and many out of the Delta) already know how good Doe's food is; and now the James Beard Foundation has recognized Doe's as an American Classic. Doe's has the prestigious distinction of being the only restaurant recognized this year from Mississippi. "I was really shocked when we got the news," said Doe Signa, Jr., Doe's owner.

Each year the James Beard Foundation presents the American Classic award to four small regional restaurants, casual watering holes, shacks, lunch counters, or eateries that have offered good, down-home cooking and unmatched hospitality for generations. Restaurants considered for this accolade offer a very distinct menu and atmosphere and are a slice of American culinary history.

What began as a grocery store in the 1940's on Greenville's famed Nelson Street, Doe's has evolved into an American icon of cultural and culinary living history. One loyal patron said, "You know any restaurant that doesn't have a menu has to be good. Not only is the food the best in the south, you feel like you're part of the family. You don't mind that the table cloths don't match," she



L to R: Doe Signa, III, his mother Sug, Doe Signa, II, and his nephew, Charles Signa, III, all work at the restaurant.

commented "it just adds that much more to the atmosphere."

Even though there is no printed menu for hungry customers to peruse, Doe's offerings are limited, but each one very good and will please any palate. One and a half to two pound T-bones and Porterhouses, three to four pound Sirloins, and 10 oz. filets are lightly seasoned and

cooked to absolute perfection under a flaming gas broiler. Seasoned hot tamales are hand-wrapped and tied, then allowed to simmer all day in enormous pots on the front stove just waiting for patrons to order them by the dozens, or take out for a quick dinner or special occasion. Delicious just out of the wrapper, or you can order them covered with chili and melted

cheddar cheese. Don't forget to order salad!

For years, Doe's served only fried shrimp until Doe, Jr. added broiled Shrimp Scampi with lemon, garlic and seasonings. Normally, the Scampi is served with hand-cut French fries, but if you really want to savor every bite, ask for it served over pasta.

Other offerings include gumbo, chili, and spaghetti and meatballs. Serving generation after generation, both white and African American over the years, Doe's has become a symbol of the Delta's multiracial culture. And serving those generations has been a family affair all these years for the Signa family. "There are three generations of us working here now," said Doe, including Doe, Jr., his wife, Sug, their son Doe, along with Doe's brother's son Charles, his wife and son and their Aunt Florence.

Founded in 1990, the Foundation celebrates, preserves and nurtures America's culinary heritage and diversity to elevate the appreciation of our country's culinary excellence.

The family will attend the black-tie affair this month in New York City to receive their award. ▲