

Client Spotlight

CHAMPS: *Where Everybody Knows Your Name*

Making your way in the world today takes everything you've got. Taking a break from all your worries sure would help a lot. Wouldn't you like to get away? Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name...so the song goes.

Who says you have to be in Boston to go to a place where everybody knows your name and they're always glad you came? Grosse Pointe Woods has its own "Cheers" in "Champs" - the neighborhood BBQ house that provides dining and spirits in a cozy atmosphere complete with a fireplace and traditional decor. This tightly-knit community embraced Grosse Pointe Woods resident Dan Curis when he bought the establishment in October of 2007. "I closed the deal one day after what would have been my dad's 77th birthday - so I knew it was the right thing to do." In Dan's own words, his dad taught him everything he knows - both about life and the restaurant business. Dan's dad was one of the first franchise owners of Big Boy back in the early 60s. He worked for a vending machine company, and one of his accounts was Big Boy. "My dad spent years filling up the cigarette machine in Big Boy, so when he got word that they started franchising - he asked for one," says Dan. Well, he not only bought that one, but 13 others over the years. And Dan continued in his father's footsteps and runs the family business with his brothers.

And it was his neighborhood Big Boy customers, most of whom he knows by name, who convinced him to purchase Champs, the other neighborhood establishment just down the street. "My Big Boy customers traveled down the street to Champs, just to tell me how proud they were of me and how happy they were for me. I didn't expect that level of support. It humbled me." Now Dan might see them at Big Boy for a lunch of salad bar and soup, and at dinner time for a rack of ribs. "All of my customers at both

establishments are regulars. We are more than acquaintances. We know what is going on in each other's lives." And Dan is responsive to the needs of his clientele, as well. He opens on Christmas, for example, citing that many of his customers are seniors, and appreciate a local place to enjoy a meal among friends. "It's certainly not a profitable day for me, but I want my customers to have a place to be on Christmas."



Dan Curis ~ "Champ" of Champs

Dan is quick to distinguish his "Champs" - with one P - from the national chain of "Champps" - with the double P. The Grosse Pointe Woods Champs' name is derived from the original owner - Jim Champion, who in the mid 90s changed the name from the "BBQ House of Grosse Pointe" to "Champs" once he added an outdoor patio and obtained a liquor license. The fact is that this modest, cozy dinner place has nothing in common with the national chain that offers mainly American fare. "While Champs has always offered the best in rotisserie fare, it now offers a variety of fish entrees," explains Dan. "We wanted to give our customers more options."

Dan is quick to note that he receives his most important source of support right at home - from his wife Ann, who has supported him in every endeavor. And just down the street from Champs is GHD - "the accounting firm that takes care of me," quips Dan. "I'm a people-person and a visionary. With GHD, I never have to worry or second guess - I just let them do their job because I know they will - and that they will do it right!"

Visit Champs in Grosse Pointe Woods - *they'll always be glad you came!*

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