

Snoots, catfish and community: New barbecue business opens on Washington

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
May 14 2016 10:26 AM



ALTON - Culinary entrepreneur **Jason Harrison** developed his business plan for his new restaurant while working in the kitchen of the Riverbender Community Center two years ago.

J's Market Grill, the embodiment of that plan opened at the end of April in the former Dairy Queen building, located at 1808 Washington. It features a mixed menu of fried fish and barbecue, grilled with pride behind the building. Harrison said the art of grilling has been one of his favorite methods of cooking. His father, **Greg Harrison**, operates Saints Catering.

Jason Harrison received his start decorating cakes for his father, before moving onto grilling, which quickly became his favorite.

"There's something about watching the meat develop from raw, to a cooked item to something people love," Jason Harrison said.

He added food, as well as music, was a great way to bring people from all walks of life together. He wants J's Market Grill to be a sort of communal gathering spot. Since having his soft opening only a matter of weeks ago, he said his goal has been more than met.

"Our vision and goal is to redefine greatness in the food area," Jason Harrison said. "When you think of greatness, I want your experience to be redefined here in every aspect of the word."

Word of Jason Harrison's goals have been spreading throughout the community. He said the business had sold 180 pounds of "snoots," which are sliced pig snouts, in their first two weeks of business. While using approximately seven ounces per sandwich, that equates a lot of orders.

"I haven't talked about it on my personal Facebook or anything," he said. "This is pretty much entirely word of mouth."

Jason Harrison said he hopes to host a grand opening later in the summer with live music, good food, and entertainment for kids. He also hopes to expand the "market" aspect of the name, so his patrons can utilize EBT at the business.

"One of my goals as a business is to incorporate the market side, so we can accept EBT here," he said. "We want everyone to enjoy the food and let it bring them together."

The menu was developed from a mix of Jason Harrison's former businesses, the Fish Spot on Washington in Alton and J's Spot in East Alton, near the Berkshire. He also added brisket to the menu, a dish with which he was formerly not experienced. He said

he took several phone and video lessons from his Texas-based cousin, before getting it perfected after a few months. Now, he said, the brisket is one of the hottest sellers on the menu.

Currently, Jason Harrison is very pleased with his new business. He greeted several customers of a lunchtime rush last Friday, many of whom he knew on a first-name basis. He said he was able to make his dreams come true with a mix of business sense and persistence.

"When the Dairy Queen moved out of here, and the building came up for sale, I called the owner and said I really wanted the building, but had no money," Jason Harrison recalled, laughing. "I called them every month, until eventually they wanted to work something out with me due to my persistence."

J's Market Grill also provides catering. It may be reached by calling (618) 465-1575.

