

Snackers creators: Olga's chefs, smiling kitchen specialist put customers first

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
April 16 2015 1:30 PM



Three long-time employees have helped make Olga's Alton Square Mall location an area institution and the famed "snackers" a tradition for customers.

The local restaurant's most talked about menu item is the "snackers" and two men constantly preparing them in the kitchen are Carnell Brown and Sean Griggs.

The other key player is a kitchen specialist Andre Vann, someone customers adore because he always has a smile on his face and is polite, putting them first.

Griggs and Brown agree that the snackers are one of the mainstays on Olga's menu, which emphasizes fresh bread.

"Cooking the bread is my favorite thing," Griggs said. "It is nice and fresh throughout the day. Our snackers are the most popular item on the menu. Everybody asks about the snackers."

Griggs and Brown both make appearances in the dining room to check with customers and now see a lot of familiar faces.

"You know you are doing a good job when they come back and want to talk to us," Griggs said. "I like working with people and seeing how they like our food and how fresh it is."

For Vann, cleanliness is next to godliness with his dishes.

"I am a kitchen specialist and I make sure all the dishes are clean and sanitized," he said. "I am a hard worker. Sometimes I joke around with people. Customers see my energy on the job and walking back and forth with the dishes. I enjoy it when I see someone out in public and they say, 'that guy works at Olga's.'"

The top goal for Vann every day when he arrives at Olga's is to satisfy the customer.

"I have to be fast," he said. "I am pretty quick with my hands and always make sure the dishes are returned back to the kitchen."

Brown, an Olga's chef for 12 years, grew up in Alton, but now lives in Jerseyville and draws people from there to Olga's.

"I love to cook," he said. "I am big on cooking the bread. I enjoy preparing every meal. I make sure everything I make is up to company standards and regulations. It goes out the way I would like it for myself."

Brown said his grandmother initially spurred him to cook. Andre is his brother and he has worked with Griggs his entire 12 years there.

"We go hand in hand," he said of Griggs and Vann.

All three Olga's workers said their attraction to the company is how it is a "family" type of business, both to employees and customers.

"I would like to recognize Carol Hutchinson, manager here for 34 years of the 37 years that we now have been open," Griggs said. "She is now retired. She established the base for the family feel here at Olga's. There is a closeness and togetherness of the workers both inside and outside work."