



Schomberg, Ontario, Canada

OCTOBER, 2013

Sheena's Kitchen

Sheena's Kitchen is a popular restaurant on Main Street in the village of Schomberg. For twenty years, customers have enjoyed the friendly atmosphere and home-style cooking of this country kitchen.

The People

Customers come from a wide variety of locations, both near and far. Local business owners and staff are regulars, as are a number of Schomberg and other King Township residents. Customers from neighbouring communities like Stouffville, Alliston, Tottenham, Kleinburg, and many others, enjoy the hospitality of Sheena's Kitchen.

Sheena generally makes the pastry and the very famous lemon cream sponge cake. This item has been enjoyed by customers visiting the restaurant and by those from far and wide, who have experienced the treat through their own guests purchasing it from Sheena's, and bringing it as their dessert contribution to the social gathering. Baked goods have been sent overseas to Britain. At the end of the day, as staff heads home, Sheena heads to her home-based office to handle the paperwork for the day's business and the next day's plans.

Sheena currently employs 1 full-time person, and 9 part-time people, most of whom live locally. Staff ranges in age from 15 to 81 years of age. One employee has been with Sheena for 29 years. The restaurant is open 7 days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The staff begins their day at 8:00 a.m. setting up tables, putting the daily specialty menu items on the board, and, most importantly, preparing the day's fare.

Born 81 years ago in a small farming community in the southwest of Scotland, Sheena had an early appreciation of home cooking with farm fresh ingredients. She studied culinary sciences in Glasgow, but there were few opportunities for women in the bakery and restaurateur industries at that time. After working in the industry in England for a brief time, Sheena, with a friend, boarded the plane to Toronto in 1966.



Sheena Henderson, proud owner and operator of Sheena's Kitchen

Having taken clerical courses in England, she found employment doing clerical work. She worked for a number of years in the Toronto's court system. Her first venture into the bakery industry was a small space in the Thornhill Market, where she sold her homemade strawberry tarts and pies in the evenings. Sheena continued to add items to her 'menu' of market offerings. The owner of a door-to-door food delivery business approached her to provide product. She accepted, and her customer base increased.

In the early 1980's, space in Crawford Wells, in King City, came available. She initially sold wholesale and then opened restaurant space. It was during this time, in 1983, that she met Kathy Vogan, also leasing space in Crawford Wells and selling unique handmade gifts through her company of Piety Ridge. The businesses complemented each other nicely, and the two developed a working relationship that would span thirty years, and continues to this day on Main Street in Schomberg.

The Product



Sheena's Kitchen offers traditional home cooking in a quaint country atmosphere. Walls are decorated with images of local history and paintings by local artists. Tables accommodating the indoor capacity of about 25 at a sitting, are arranged to seat a variety of groupings. Each table is covered with a pastel floral print, with matching linen napkins. Tables and chairs of wood come from various sources, some custom made, others purchased from cottage garage sales, and others from neighbours, all brought together to create a friendly environment for a home-cooked meal with good friends and lively conversation. Customers can also enjoy the outside patio overlooking Main Street.

Recipes are drawn from Sheena's personal years of experience, from staff favourites, from a variety of cookbooks, and from popular recipes found in publications like Canadian Living. Each recipe contains quality ingredients, and Sheena and the kitchen staff add creatively to make the recipes their own.

The daily menu varies from day to day, with a wide selection of soups, sandwiches, salads, casserole main courses like quiche and Shepherd's Pie, dessert squares and specialty desserts, and numerous other items.

"The menu becomes what the customer likes."

Sheena Henderson

The kitchen staff determines the daily menu, which includes meat, chicken, fish, vegetable and pasta dishes. Each item is made on site, using fresh ingredients, purchased locally whenever possible. The filling for pumpkin pies is made from pumpkins, rather than from prepared canned mixes.

The Performance

When Sheena started in the Thornhill Market, it was with strawberry tarts and pies. The learning curve over the years has been enormous. At the Crawford Wells location, during the 10 years Sheena's Kitchen was located there from 1983 to 1993, Sheena moved from wholesale baking to a tea room, offering light meals.

In January of 1994, as she was ready to handle a larger space, the move was made to the mill on Main Street in Schomberg. In January 2014, Sheena will celebrate 20 years in Schomberg. A year after moving the business, Sheena herself moved from King City to Schomberg, within walking distance of her business.



The home style kitchen has become more industrial, with a commercial oven, and inspections made by the York Region Health Department on a quarterly basis. A convection oven was installed, for efficiency and to meet the demands of increased volume. A lot has changed since that first strawberry pie!

Sheena has added significantly to the services and menu items available. As well as the restaurant menu and table service, Sheena has added

take-out and catering menus, and a number of freezer items available to customers. A specialty baker creates theme cookies for all occasions. Special orders are also accommodated on request; one customer orders ahead for a month.

Originally, the customers were usually close to retirement age, and very often women. This has changed to include regular visits from a hiking club, families, students, and reservations for special occasions. One such reservation was for breakfast for a family gathering of 18, of all ages.

Originally, the mild weather of late Spring, Summer, and early Fall drew customers. There has been a noticeable shift with customers coming north to enjoy the beauty of the countryside, followed by lunch at Sheena's. Schomberg's Main Street Christmas menu, which includes a supper of stew or vegetarian chili has drawn a huge following, with reservations being made a year in advance. There is also increased demand for traditional Christmas items like Christmas pudding and mincemeat tarts.

The reputation of Sheena's Kitchen has spread far and wide by word-of-mouth. The regular customers invite friends and visitors to share home cooking in a charming environment. Those who purchase from the take-out and catering menus also spread the word. Sheena's success is based on dedication, focus, attention to detail, and pride in providing quality product and quality service for a memorable experience.

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