

Q and A



with Neil Jolcover, Co-owner of Gator's Pub and Grill

by Brian Kelley

Q: How did you get into the restaurant business and why?

Neil: My wife Laura and her family had owned Mario's Restaurant in Northbrook for 20 years. When my mother-in-law sold Mario's the kids still had the passion for the restaurant/pub business.

My partner David Weiss, who is my brother-in-law and I were looking to start a restaurant together and came across our original location in Wheeling. We purchased that and everything worked out really well. We wanted to open up a restaurant/pub where we could implement our ideas and create a friendly atmosphere that people would enjoy going to while getting the best food in a casual environment.

Q: How would you describe your restaurant to someone who's never been to it?

Neil: The best way to describe our restaurant is to compare it with the show "Cheers" That's the type of place it is, not a sports bar, but a restaurant/pub with a friendly atmosphere, good service, great food and a lot of regular customers. When you walk in, people know who you are.

Q: Why did you open up restaurant in Palatine?

Neil: We wanted a restaurant with more of a family atmosphere where people could take their kids. We have a patio, a non-smoking room and a kid's menu so it's very conducive for a family evening.



Q: How did you choose the name of your restaurant?

Neil: We were looking for a friendly, catchy name and we threw a lot of things back and forth. We wanted to call it a pub because of the atmosphere and Gators just came out of many ideas we had. It gave us an instant logo and one that's easy to remember.

Q: What is your favorite item on the menu?

Neil: Our Buffalo wings. That is something that people travel from all over for. We've been voted "Best Wings" in Chicagoland for the last three years at Chicago's Wing Fest. The way that we prepare them and present them in an old-fashioned wooden bowl steaming hot right to your table really sets them apart. They just keep coming back for more.

The best way to describe our restaurant is to compare it with the show "Cheers."

Q: What is your typical customer like?

Neil: Our customer base is a melting pot of all ages and people. We draw a lot of blue-collar people, a lot of suits for lunch, we get lots of families in for dinner and since we're open till 4:00 a.m. every night, we get a lot of bar and restaurant people.

Q: What is your favorite comment you received from a customer?

Neil: I'm just always pleased when I receive positive feedback about our service, our cleanliness, the quality of our food and the atmosphere we try to create.

Q: What are your future goals for the restaurant?

Neil: We started out with the original Gators in Wheeling about seven-and-a-half years ago. Almost two years ago, we opened our Palatine location just five minutes from Buffalo Grove. We would like to open up a couple more restaurants including a city location and just maintain serving what we think is the best food in a nice, casual atmosphere.

Q: What do you like most about owning a restaurant?

Neil: I enjoy meeting different people and knowing that everyday is going to be different. Also, I enjoy the satisfaction of having a place that people really enjoy coming to. For a lot of people we're their home and that's how we want it to be.

Neil Jolcover, co-owner of Gator's Pub and Grill.