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"Preserving Our Past While Working On Our Future"

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Big J's SmokeHouse Eat-In Restaurant Opening Soon

By: Karen Carpenter

Most people have goals of some kind in life. Some of the goals come to fruition, many don't. But, one keeps dreaming.

For one young man in Rothsay one of his lifetime goals is about to materialize. Justin Matheson has been working out of his food trailer and carving out a reputation for good eats for the past three years.

Matheson owns Big J's SmokeHouse food truck operating in Rothsay and the surrounding area. His goal though was to own his own restaurant. His hope was to see that happen within 10 years. The opportunity to fulfil that goal came up a lot sooner than he expected.

That goal became a reality on February 1, 2019 when he signed papers to purchase the building located at 134 First Street SW in Rothsay. It was the former location of Ole & Lena's Pizzeria owned by Shane Balken also of Rothsay.

Ole & Lena's officially closed on December 31, 2018. Balken had operated the business for 12 years.

Balken admits that his original plan was to close Ole & Lena's for

only a month or two at the beginning of 2019 and do some renovations to the building.

Matheson made an offer to buy the business. "I wouldn't have closed Ole & Lena's if the opportunity hadn't come up for another restaurant business to locate in the building," said Balken.

Balken continues to distribute Ole & Lena's frozen pizzas at various local outlets.

Matheson has been working to remodel the restaurant since taking over the property. An opening date for the new restaurant is still up in the air, and depends on how quickly the renovations progress. He is hoping to open sometime in March.

Painting, replacing carpet, adding a tin wainscot to the walls and making changes to the kitchen equipment are a few of the updates.

On the second level of the 75 seat capacity restaurant, Matheson took out an office and made a serving station.

"I am installing another pop machine upstairs and serving station so the servers don't have to run up



Justin Matheson holds the sign that will be hung at his new restaurant. Matt Balken of Rothsay custom made the sign. Behind Matheson is shown the tin wainscot that adorns the lower portion of the walls. Matheson hopes that Big J's SmokeHouse Restaurant will be ready to open sometime in March. He will continue to take his food truck, by the same name, to local communities weekly as well as attend festivals in the area. Big J's will also continue to cater parties of any type.

and down the stairs as often," said Matheson. Tables can be reset, cleaned and beverages served without traversing the stairs.

Structurally the building is pretty sound so most of the renovations are cosmetic.

Big J's SmokeHouse will serve all of the specialties that the food truck serves.

On the menu will be brisket sandwiches, pulled pork sandwiches and ribs on which Matheson has built a reputation.

The restaurant will also serve several types of burgers and pizza along with sides and desserts.

There is room to seat about 25 people on the lower level of the establishment and another 50 upstairs.

The food trailer, Big J's SmokeHouse, was five years in the making. Matheson and his father, Kevin, built the trailer themselves making it fit Justin's food specialties. The food truck became operational at the beginning of 2016.

Matheson's love of cooking started at a young age. When he was a freshman in high school, Matheson built a small smoker with help from dad in their home shop. He began his cooking endeavors by preparing food for the family.

From there Matheson built a bigger smoker and cooked for his own graduation party. He is a 2011 Rothsay High School graduate.

After high school Matheson chose North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS). He considered studying computer science but instead chose the culinary arts program.

"Attending NDSCS was what

got me into the food business," said Matheson.

Matheson did some catering using his larger smoker. He served reunions, graduations and other family gatherings.

After completing the culinary program Matheson began working at Ole & Lena's Pizzeria in Rothsay. He continued to work for Shane Balken during the winter months even after he started his own business.

Since Matheson was friends with, and had a working relationship with Balken, it was a natural transition to purchase the building.

Matheson will need to hire between 10 and 15 part-time employees to operate both the restaurant and the food truck. "I will hire as many former employees of Ole & Lena's who want to work," said Matheson.

Although there will be other employees hired, the business will

primarily be a family affair.

Matheson's mother, Mary, will manage the restaurant when he is out running the food truck portion of the business.

Mary Matheson will retire this spring from her position at Cass County in Fargo, ND.

Justin's brother, Chris, who recently returned from military duty, will also work in the restaurant and food truck.

Kevin will help out on the food truck on busy weekends, when his schedule permits, as he has been doing in the past. He is employed at North Dakota State University in Fargo.

Justin says he is lucky to have so much family support. He also has a sister, Monica, who resides in Florida.

Big J's SmokeHouse food truck will still be on the road several weekends a year serving food at festivals and area community events.

Matheson has scheduled stops in towns from May to October. Start and stop dates all depend on the weather. The water for the food truck is outside the unit meaning that he has to shut down when it gets close to freezing.

This coming summer, Big J's SmokeHouse food truck will be set up each Tuesday in Wahpeton, Wednesday in Fergus Falls and on Fridays in Barnesville. "I would like to add some other communities," stated Matheson, "but, we will see how it goes."

About a third of the food truck business has been in the area of catering. Matheson has served

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Farmers With Ties To Ashby Elevator Must File



Farmers who have conducted business with the Ashby Farmers Cooperative Elevator of Ashby, Minn., must submit a bond claim with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture by March 23. This applies to farmers that have not received payment or who had grain stored at the elevator.

The elevator, in accordance with the law, held a \$125,000 bond with the Department to help grain sellers and depositors mitigate any losses. To submit a claim, a farmer will need to do the following steps:

Complete a Grain Bond Proof of Claim Form. This can be found at mda.state.mn.us/grain.

Include supporting evidence. This is including but not limited to scale tickets, purchase agreements, purchase receipts, non-sufficient funds checks, contracts, warehouse receipts, assembly sheets, etc.

Send in the form and supporting

evidence by email to christine.mader@state.mn.us, fax to 651 201-6108, or mail to: Minnesota Department of Agriculture Fruit Vegetable & Grain Unit 625 North Robert Street St Paul, MN. 55155 Claims must be received by March 23, 2019.

Once all claims are received, the MDA will review all submitted claims, associated paperwork, internal documents, and records from inspector visits to determine which claims are valid. In the case of multiple valid claims, a pro-rated share is calculated and dispersed. A decision of disbursements of valid bond claims will be made by May 20, 2019.

Questions on this process can be directed to Christine Mader at 651 201-6620 or christine.mader@state.mn.us, or Nick Milanowski at 651 201-6076 or nicholas.milanowski@state.mn.us.

Ice Dam Prevention Is Best Course For Homeowners

By Michael Stein

As we continue to cope with the effects of cold and near-record snow for the month of February, homeowners are reminded to check for "silent" conditions that may result in serious damage. Ice dams are one of the most common, and perilous, conditions homeowners face.

I can speak from experience about ice dams—and turn bright red in the process.

Several years ago, when our kids were still going to daycare, we had an ice dam on the roof that was growing thicker than Grandma's fast-acting oatmeal.

One day I walked through the front door and into our living room to find the ceiling had caved in. The material was that old heavy plaster, so it caused some major damage to our furniture and decimated our March issue of Better Homes and Gardens.

We were incredibly lucky nobody was home at the time of the collapse—except the cat. I found



her hiding under a bed with a look on her face that said, "The ASPCA will hear about this."

We traced the cause to aging cedar shingles and an attic that was much too warm and not properly ventilated. We solved the problem by installing a new roof and quality shingles, adding several more vents

under the eaves, and sending the cat to therapy.

And yes, we did repair the ceiling. My idea of a living room under the stars was met with great scorn and derision—much like my basement lap pool idea.

We further removed ourselves from the problem by buying a new

house.

So what are ice dams? They are ridges of ice that can form on your roof's eaves in sub-freezing temperatures, which are pretty much all we've had so far this year.

If the dam is high enough, it can block any melting from running safely into the gutter. The result is a watery pool behind the dam, which can leak through the roof. And that's not good for anyone.

If you have a tangle of icicles hanging from your eaves, you'll want to investigate further as that's one of the first obvious signs of an ice dam.

According to the University of Minnesota Extension Office, ice dams can form when warm air inside your home heats part of the roof—or inside your attic—above 32 degrees when it's below freezing outside. When the sun starts hitting that snow on top and causes melting, the water can run down the roof to the eaves where it refreezes.

In a long winter like we've had this year, this cycle of freezing,

thawing and re-freezing can cause thick ice dams along the edges of your roof.

Some proactive maintenance you can do yourself—as long as, you're very careful—is to remove that high buildup of snow with a roof rake. You could also create a channel in the ice dam to drain the snowmelt using calcium chloride tablets.

More permanent protection is to simply insulate your attic to reduce

heat loss through the roof and make sure you have adequate ventilation, an example of which is venting on the underside of your roof eaves.

Your best course of action is to contact a professional who can remove ice dams. Personally, I would defer to the experts. Besides, my family doesn't allow me to climb extension ladders since the infamous "failing to secure the foot grips" incident of 2012.

