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Jimmy's of Chicago Offers Windy City Food, Cheer to East Valley Neighbors

Gilbert restaurant owners Zalena and Kerry Kersting have quietly been showing this East Valley community why Chicago is their kind of town. Walking through the doors of their restaurant Jimmy's of Chicago is like stepping through a portal to the iconic Midwest city – minus the infamous snow and wind.

Regardless of outside temperatures, guests still find that greeting of warmth and friendship as they walk in the door and take a seat in one of the roomy booths or step into the lively bar. Photos of the city skyline, the Sear's Tower, and signed sports jerseys line the walls and the smell of authentic Italian home cooking fills the air.

The Kersting's opened Jimmy's in December 2008 as a southwest sister to Jimmy's Place – a neighborhood Chicago spot owned by Zalena's family for more than 10 years. The Arizona outpost shares the family's Italian and Chicago recipes and hopes to become the same type of neighborhood meeting place where families and friends gather for food, drinks and events.

It all starts with the menu featuring a full range of Chicago Italian fare including stuffed artichokes, sirloin stuffed mushrooms, homemade gnocchi, thin crust pizza, and cavatelli with vodka or spicy vodka sauce, bracirole, sausage, peppers and Vesuvio potatoes. Of course, the Italian Beef Sandwich – a Chicago staple – is also there.

"I'm extremely picky about all our dishes and insist that everything taste just like my mom made it," says Zalena who grew up in the Italian home where dinner consisted of enough food to feed the neighbors and everyone was always welcome.

The portions are true Italian – generous enough to share. Prices range from \$11 - \$20 for pasta and entrees and include soup or salad. Appetizers and sandwiches are \$4 - \$9. All dinners begin with a basket of homemade Italian bread, made daily.

Happy hour is daily from 3 – 6 pm and has \$2 domestic bottles, \$5 domestic 60 oz pitchers, \$2.50 well drinks and \$5 house wines. There is a rotating daily happy hour appetizer special as well as daily lunch specials.

Even if you've never been to Chi-Town, the décor and ambience at Jimmy's will take you there. Booths line the main wall and just around the corner is a quaint bar and waiting area. To the side is large dining area that can be closed for private events of up to 55 people. The cozy restaurant has the feel of the family dining room, even more so when Jimmy's hosts an event, fundraiser or its Sinatra-style lounge singer serenades the guests on Wednesday nights. Sports are always on the televisions, especially when a Chicago or Arizona team is playing.

Being a part of the community is an essential for Zalena and Kerry. They frequently host events and contests like Karaoke every Saturday night, and raffles for signed jerseys during football and baseball season.

Jimmy's is currently raising money for fallen DPS Officer Christopher Marano's family by raffling signed Cubs paraphenlia. Former Cubs Pitcher, Lee Smith, will sign autographs and raffle these items on March 4, the opening day of Spring Training.

On Wednesday, March 31, Jimmy's will host Chicago Cubs legend Fergie Jenkins as he signs memorabilia in support of the Fergie & Friends Foundation. Jimmy's will also raffle off a Cubs jersey signed by Fergie.

Jimmy's of Chicago is located on the NE corner of Pecos and Gilbert Roads, just north of HWY 202 (3107 S. Gilbert Rd.). It's open Tuesday – Sunday for lunch and dinner. The bar is open until the last guest leaves or 2 am. Contact Jimmy's at 480-963-6363 or online at www.jimmysofchicago.com.

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