

singular passion

With two restaurants in Michigan City, Mark Kolasa has put his love of cooking to good use

Kaitlin Vanderpool, The LaPorte County Herald-Argus

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MICHIGAN CITY - Mark Kolasa has always had a passion.

"I've never done anything else except for cook," he said.

Kolasa is owner and executive chef of Café Elite in Michigan City. He and his friend, co-owner Amanda Kosek, opened the café on April 11, 2003. Kolasa said he and Kosek made the decision to open a café together because they had always been in the restaurant business.

"And it was something we'd wanted to do all our lives," he said.

Now Kolasa's dream is two-fold.

He also owns Savory's, 624 Wabash St., Michigan City, just a few blocks down from Café Elite. But he said the two restaurants are very different.

While the café offers a casual to fine dining experience for lunch and dinner, Savory's is more of a sandwich shop - "a neat little place to get something fast," he said.

Between the two, Kolasa said he finds little free time to relax. But he also said it's all worth it.

"The most enjoyable part (of owning your own restaurant) is that you're doing it for yourself," he said. "You're not doing it for anyone else."

Except for the customers.

Kolasa said the café has accumulated a large group of regular patrons over the past five years. But he said there are many people who simply find the restaurant on the Internet and decide to give it a try.

And judging from the numerous awards that decorate the wall, the customers are pleased.

Café Elite has been the recipient of honors like the Hoosier Hospitality Award, The Unsung Hero Award and the Best of Café Restaurants Award, all for outstanding service and excellent food.

Food like the pretzel encrusted chicken - the café's bestseller.

But it isn't all honors and awards. Kolasa said there are some challenges being a small restaurant owner.

"As an owner, you have about 100 different hats to wear," Kolasa said. "(It's challenging) trying to balance yourself to make (your business) successful."

Café Elite, 231 W. Seventh St., Michigan City, is open Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. The café is nonsmoking and offers both indoor and outdoor dining.

For more information on the café, visit www.cafeeliteandcatering.com.



By Bob Wellinski The interior of Cafe Elite in Michigan City.

Bio Box

Name: Mark Kolasa

Age: 27

Born and raised in: Michigan City

Occupation: Owner and executive chef of Café Elite and Savory's

Hobbies: Being outside and working around the house.

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