

Good eggs. Good meat. Good company. Let's eat.

Art's Barbecue & Deli

900 E. Morehead St.

Where's the (roast) beef?: Co-owner Danny Katopodis has seen Dilworth grow since his dad, Art, opened the restaurant 31 years ago. In 1989, Danny added "& Deli" to the name, to let folks know the place sells more than barbecue, he said.

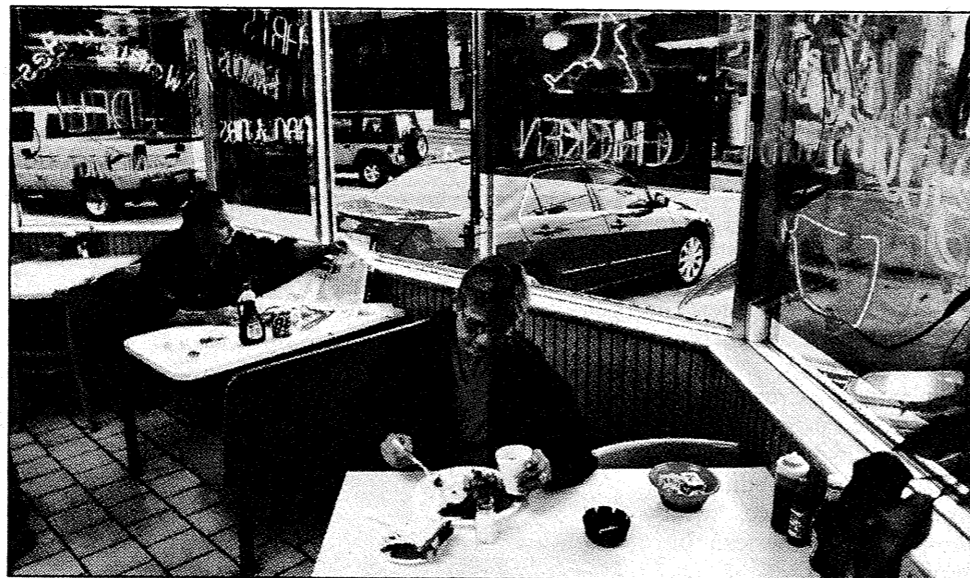
Politicians, Panthers, parcels: Diners run the gamut: families, bankers and elders. Mayor Pat McCrory and county commissioner Parks Helms are regulars, and Carolina Panthers owner Jerry Richardson has broken bread with UPS employees, Danny Katopodis said.

Diners' dish: Becky Schaening likes that the owners know her order before she places it. Plus, the restaurant is close enough to her job at Metrolina Kidney Center to walk.

Fan favorite: The breakfast special for \$2.25: two eggs, biscuit or toast and grits or home fries. Add a side of meat for \$1.20.

Is that coffee covered?: Danny's wife, Kim, an insurance agent, works at Art's from time to time. Kim has referred clients to Art's; Danny has referred customers to Kim. "I'll ask, 'How's your food? How's your insurance?'" Danny said.

Hours: 6:30 a.m.-3 p.m. weekdays; 7 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday. Breakfast ends about 11. "We don't watch the clock," Katopodis said. 704-334-9424.



Susan Richmond and Mike Compton eat breakfast at Art's Barbecue & Deli on Morehead Street.

PHOTOS BY DAVIE HINSHAW - dhinshaw@charlotteobserver.com

John's Country Kitchen

1518 Central Ave.

Thanks, Mom: Jimmy Margiotis co-owns John's with his mom, Margaret, who bought the restaurant with his father, John, in 1977. Most of the regulars call Margaret "Mom" - even those with gray hair, she chuckled.

Diners' dish: "It's like a family," said Don Bramwell, who's been a customer for almost 10 years. He calls Margaret Margiotis "Mom," too. She's the heart and soul of this place, he said.

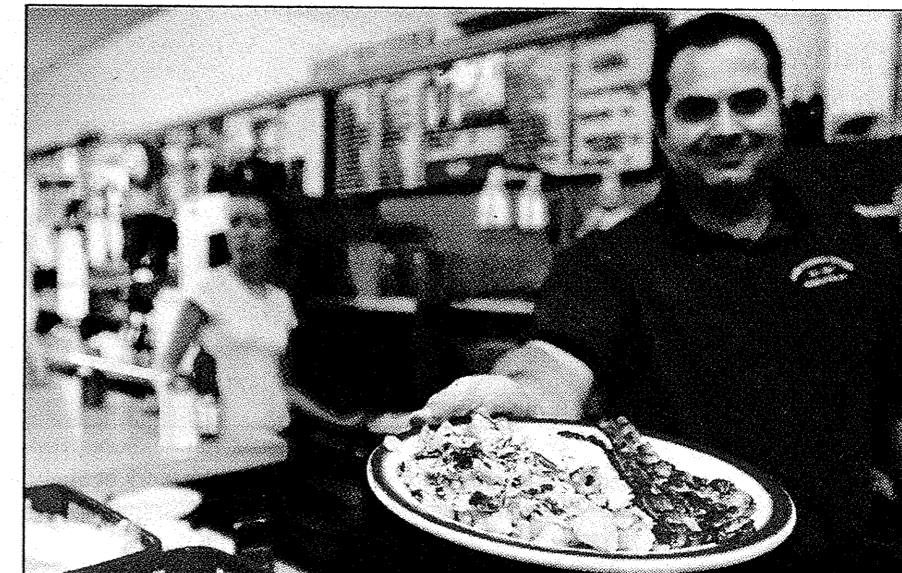
Brenda and Richard Henry of Weddington have breakfast at John's every Friday. Brenda Henry said she can eat three or four pancakes in one sitting.

Fan favorite: "Everything," Jimmy Margiotis says. "No, really."

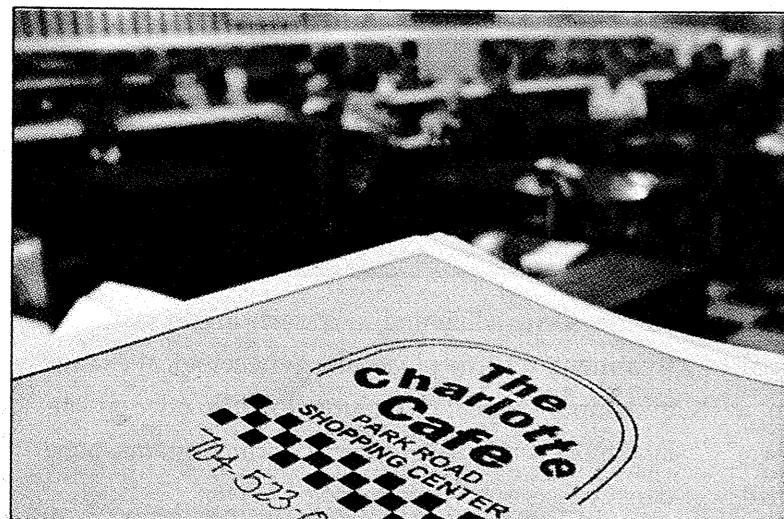
Contractor Thomas Pruitt raves about the Greek omelet, which isn't on the menu. But Jimmy will customize an omelet for anyone, he said.

Norm! Jimmy and Margaret Margiotis know most customers and their "usual." "It's like 'Cheers,'" Jimmy said.

Hours: 6 a.m.-3 p.m. weekdays; 6 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday. Breakfast ends at 11 a.m. weekdays. Credit cards not accepted. 704-333-9551.



Jimmy Margiotis with a plate of breakfast food he just cooked at John's Country Kitchen on Central Avenue.



The Charlotte Cafe in the Park Road Shopping Center is always ready for customers.

The Charlotte Cafe

4127 Park Road

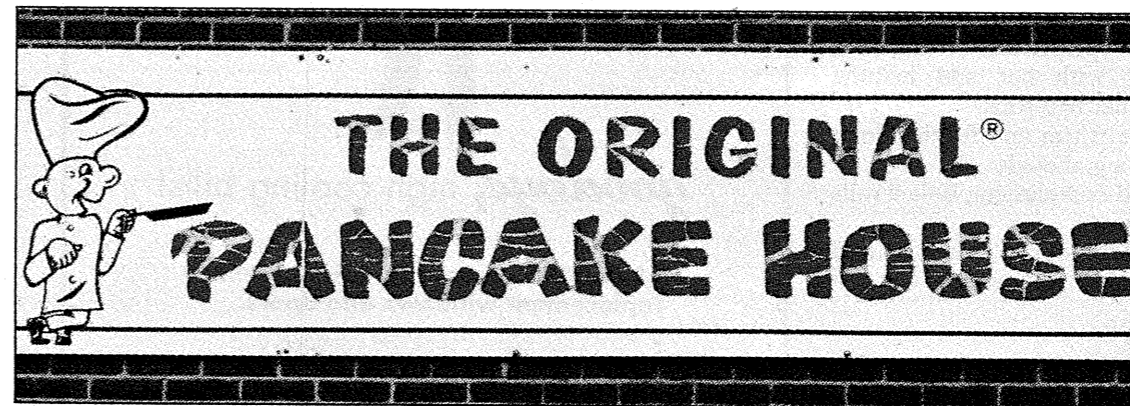
"A happy place": Owner Jimmy Roupas says customers and employees get along well. Servers know the regulars' orders without even asking, Roupas said.

Diners' dish: Some patrons said the servers are what's great about the cafe, because they seem to enjoy being there.

Fan favorite: Roupas sells a lot of pancakes and omelets, he said. In fact, the pancake recipe was passed down from his father-in-law, John Moutas, 97, (a former cook with no formal training, Roupas said) who'd used the recipe since the 1930s.

Local celebrity sightings?: The Observer reported on Jan. 15 hearing that Mayor McCrory was at the cafe. Roupas said public officials - and Panthers - dine there, though he's reluctant to name names. "You want to (know)?" he asked. "Come in here and eat."

Hours: 7 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday. Breakfast ends at 11 a.m. 704-523-0431.



The Original Pancake House sign on South Boulevard. The general manager says many athletes eat at the South End location, including Charlotte Bobcat Emeka Okafor and Panthers Julius Peppers, DeShaun Foster and Steve Smith.

The Original Pancake House

1300 South Blvd., Suite 5

Familiar food: A national chain, The Original Pancake House is well recognized, especially among Charlotte tourists, said general manager Wells Kilumbu. "The name sells itself. ... People always come back," he said.

Those football guys are everywhere: Kilumbu said lots of Charlotte athletes eat at the South End location (there's another in SouthPark): Charlotte Bobcats, including Emeka Okafor, and Panthers Julius Peppers, DeShaun Foster and Steve Smith.

Diners' dish: Lawyers Aaron Benjamin, Larry Berkovich and Stu Goldstein work uptown and meet at OPH monthly to talk shop. Benjamin's not much of a pancake fan - "Which is ironic, I know," he said - and he orders eggs and toast. His colleagues do like pancakes, though.

"It's comfortable," Goldstein said of the restaurant.

Fan favorite: Bacon and eggs (with three pancakes) for \$5.85. "It's simple," Kilumbu said, "and you get the eggs the way you want."

Hours: 6:30 a.m.-2 p.m. weekdays; 7 a.m.-3 p.m. weekends. 704-372-7099, www.originalpancakehouse.com.

The Coffee Cup

914 S. Clarkson St.

Farm fresh: The restaurant's menu is 40 percent organic, said co-owner Gardine Wilson. But that doesn't take away from its soul-food roots. "It should be like coming home," Wilson said of the cuisine.

Diners' dish: "You get real bacon here," said Scott Eicher, who moved to Charlotte about six months ago. He came to The Coffee Cup after a friend recommended it.

Fan Favorite: Salmon biscuits for \$2.95. Wilson said patrons can't eat just one.

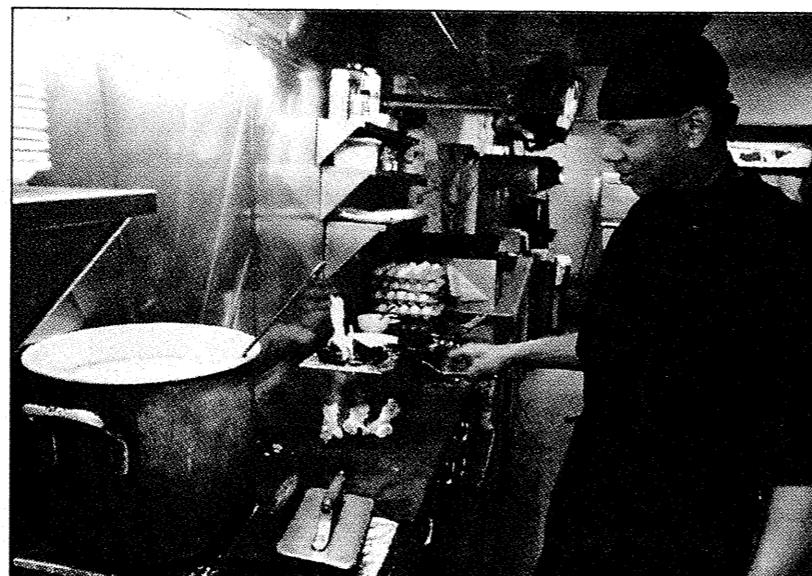
Isn't that ...?: Regulars include radio personalities No Limit Larry and Jaye Delai, the Panthers' Steve Smith and Mike Minter and City Council member James Mitchell.

After-after party: The Coffee Cup operated on a 24-hour schedule during the Charlotte CIAA tournaments the last two years. The line wrapped around the small restaurant, Wilson CIAA, but it was a "beautiful thing." "It was all love," he said.

Hours: 6 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays; 6 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday. Breakfast ends "11ish" on weekdays; a light brunch begins 10 a.m. Saturday. 704-375-8855, www.coffeecupsoul.com.

Your Breakfast Picks

Who else makes a grade-A breakfast? E-mail neighbors@charlotteobserver.com and tell us which restaurants get your day off to the right start, and why.



Cook Tiger Wilson makes bacon at The Coffee Cup. Co-owner Gardine Wilson says the menu is 40 percent organic.

Showmars

2004 E. Seventh St.

A gathering spot: This location is one of eight in the county that serve breakfast. The Seventh Street restaurant attracts bankers, lawyers and a group of eight to 10 men who meet at 6 a.m. each weekday, said managing partner Michael Koshivas.

Diners' dish: Siblings Kasper Mingo, Cloris Gates and Kenneth Wright all enjoy the service and the food. "They do livermush right," Mingo said.

Wright is a Showmars fan, but this was his first breakfast there. He enjoyed his feta omelet, he said, and he'll "definitely be back (for breakfast)."

Eggs, banter on the side: Wright and server Nancy Bolick joked around about the check. Koshivas said he's blessed to have a great staff. "They get to know people on a certain level," he said.

Fan Favorite: Depends on which day you ask. Fish and grits (\$4.25), eggs and breakfast sandwiches are big sellers during the week. Customers tend to like french toast and waffles (\$3.75-\$4) with their families on Saturdays.

Hours: 6 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, Saturday; 6 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday. Breakfast ends 10:30 a.m. weekdays and 11 a.m. Saturday. 704-376-0565, www.showmars.com.



The Showmars Restaurant on Seventh Street at Pecan Avenue attracts the same group of eight to 10 men, who meet for breakfast each weekday.