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Hans Schuler, Schuler's Restaurant & Pub Marshall, MI

Over the years, Schuler's Restaurant & Pub in historic Marshall, Michigan has been the recipient of numerous awards, but none so important as the loyalty of its patrons. In a challenging economy and changing marketplace, the iconic restaurant continues to thrive and evolve with the times.

What explains Schuler's longevity and success? The restaurant's philosophy is the key. Hans Schuler, the third-generation owner, points to a unique connection with his guests, as well as attention to the changing eating habits of those guests. "We have a saying at Schuler's," he says. "The guest shall decide."

"By this, we mean that our approaches to everything from the décor to the menu are driven by the needs and opinions of our patrons. We're always looking for something fresh, taking the best of the past and blending it with contemporary trends and tastes."

Good food and exceptional hospitality are critical. The restaurant serves traditional favorites, as well as new menu items, created by its culinary team with today's emphasis on local, fresh, and flavorful ingredients. The in-house bakery produces artisanal rolls, breads, desserts, and the famous crackers that pair with house-made Heritage Cheese Spread, a guest favorite. "We're only as good as the last meal we serve," says Schuler.

With a majority of today's marketplace consisting of chains with "cookie-cutter" approaches, Schuler sees an opportunity for independent restaurateurs. "Our success comes from understanding our markets, growing local talent, and differentiating ourselves," he says.

Schuler's heart-of-the-house and front-of-the-house team includes a number of long-term employees, and those mature members of the organization anchor a staff that also incorporates the freshness and enthusiasm of youth among the newer members of the team.

All of this works in a unique setting. Marshall, a small Midwestern town of 7,000 that evokes small town hospitality and a sense of community, has been home to the restaurant since its inception. The wooden beams in the Centennial Dining Room are inscribed with "Famous Sayings from the Pens of Celebrated Men," flanked with pictures of historic Marshall. The Pub has a warm, clubby atmosphere and is a popular gathering place for locals. For many, Marshall has become synonymous with Schuler's, which has been welcoming guests since 1909.

Eating at Schuler's has become a multi-generational affair, with long-time customers, their children, and grandchildren making



Hans Schuler

return visits—and going away satisfied. Perhaps a recent memory card left by a 10-year old captures it best: "This is my Grandpa's favorite place," it says, "and same with me." Schuler adds, "Years after my grandfather first offered the public blue plate specials, we're still committed to quality, value, and hospitality—and to providing an exceptional experience that our guests, young and old, can depend upon. We always seek to exceed our guests' expectations." Perhaps more than anything else, that approach explains Schuler's enduring popularity.

Who Is Hans Schuler?

It may come as no surprise that Hans Schuler grew up in the business. Family lore has it that when Hans was 3 years old he was asked to carry the restaurant's money sack, but dropped it on the way to the bank. Luckily, someone found it and came running into the bank with it. That early miscue notwithstanding, Hans was born to be an entrepreneur. Like all family members, he started on the dish machine. At 12 he was shucking shrimp. At 15, he worked in the restaurant's butcher shop and often ran the broiler and cooked. Later, he managed the restaurant commissary and plant operation. "Essentially, I worked every job in the place," he says.

Schuler attended Cornell University and Michigan State, where he received his degree in hotel, restaurant, and institutional management. Named president of the company in 1970, he was responsible for expanding, renovating, and supervising the business decisions that would take Schuler's into the 21st century.

Along the way, he found time to contribute to his community. He served on the local Chamber Board (and was named Marshall Young Man of the Year), then transitioned to the state level where he served as Chairman of Michigan Week for the Greater Michigan Foundation and chaired the Governor's Annual Conference on Tourism. He also chaired AAA Michigan's Board of Directors for two years.

In the early 1980s, he introduced the pub where customers can still get "an exceptional hamburg and a mug of beer." Hans set about to create a "second restaurant" adjacent to the flagship restaurant's Centennial Room, and that Pub became a popular mid-week gathering place.

In the 1980s, the decision was made to refocus the business and concentrate on the flagship restaurant in Marshall. "In order to maintain the high quality for which Schuler's is known, we felt that our resources would be better spent at the place where it all started," says Hans. "With its longevity and reputation, it was important to me to keep Schuler's in Marshall and to build on what we have there. We'll continue to evolve and to reinvest in order to keep providing the experience our guests have come to expect."