

Getting Into a New York State of Mind at Evan's Deli

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It has been a decade or so since Goldbucks Deli came and went in Vinnin Square, leaving watering mouths high and dry. But, dear readers, lo and behold, a savior has come to rescue the innocents living north of the Hub and take us on a familiar but treacherous journey, boldly going where few have dared to tread.

Enter Evan Madoff, a man in his prime, with a combination of North Shore, New York and deli blood coursing through his veins. He has taken a circuitous journey from deli man and garment traveling salesman, first in New England and then The Big Apple, to land himself squarely in the North Shore's newest deli in the very spot where his mother, Barbara (Warshofsky) Madoff operated The Clothes Tree on Smith Street in the 1970s. Now, instead of serving up dresses, Evan Madoff piles high the corned beef and pastrami, and judging from his first week in business, the hungry hordes are pushing past the door.

Trained as a school kid under Michael Sobelman of Michael's Deli in Marblehead, Madoff later lived in New York and worked, like his father, Irwin "Sonny" Madoff, in the garment trade as a traveling salesman. In the process, the Stage, Carnegie, and Katz Delis became Evan Madoff's second home. He became familiar with the Stage Deli owners. They spoke the same language, so to speak, and appreciated the same fine things in life: chopped liver, brisket, tongue, you name it.

After a dozen years in New York, the future deli man returned home; and in one conversation with a friend, Madoff had an epiphany. He would no longer work and make money for other people — he would follow his passion, own his own business. He would open his own deli!

It was mobbed during opening week at Evan's New York Style Deli, located at 31 Smith Street in Marblehead. Crowds demolished 850 pounds of corned beef and 80 pounds of chopped liver in one and one-half hours on Saturday, and one supplier "shorted" his order, Madoff said. It was dangerous to leave a sandwich unguarded, such was the hunger of North Shore carnivores.

"I'm ecstatic. I love it. I gave rain checks," Madoff said of the foods depleted early in the day. Of course, there were grumbling customers when supplies ran out, something Madoff said he'll try to avoid in the future.

My party of nine sauntered in over the weekend, and though the brisket was gone, we managed to order around it. We had spinach, potato and sweet potato knishes, which were all quite tasty. Fote's chicken salad was very good, only he would have preferred more mayonnaise; but Rachel said hers was just the right mix. The cole slaw was perfect, and Shirley's corned beef, she said, was too salty for an 85-year-old, which she is. But Brenda, a mere 53, said it was just right.

Eric, from Buffalo, dug into his garden salad with chopped chicken on top and thought it was the best he had eaten. The staff made it up special for him — with no mayo and no tomatoes.

Twins, Sarah and Jacalyn of Brooklyn, loved the grilled cheese sandwiches and the egg and cheese on an English muffin. Sarah did mutter something about New York being Number One, but she was obviously just being loyal to her town.

I had a meal of stuffed cabbage with beef smothered in a sweet tomato sauce. I finished every bite. Fote — who always samples my meals — felt the cabbage should have been coarser and had expected the filling to have beef and rice. I liked it as it was.

Brenda loved the crowds and noisy chatter at the take-out line. It was so New York.

Our party was greeted warmly, even though the place was packed; and Evan's dad, Irwin, even joined our table for a few moments to regale us with a couple of New York stories.

Evan's specialties are deli and fish platters. He prepared a fish platter for the Men's Health Club at the Jewish Community Center in Marblehead this week, and said he got rave reviews. It consisted of lox and white fish salad with red onions, tomatoes, capers, bagels, cream cheese and chives.

Even though Evan's first week was such an unexpected success that he was caught by surprise by the crowds, we recommend it and hope to see you in the deli line or at a table some time soon.--