

KRIMMER'S RESTAURANT

Nearly 20 years in the making, now it's time for celebrating

By JENNIFER McBRIDE
Daily News

Krimmer's Restaurant owner Wes Krimmer will soon celebrate the one-year anniversary of his restaurant at 114 N. Main St. but he won't be alone as many will celebrate the accomplishment with him. It took a lack of sleep, hard work and even a bit of poison ivy to make a vacant downtown West Bend building what he envisioned — a casual fine dining establishment with top-notch food.

Wes, his wife Kelsey and their family and friends made his childhood dream a reality.

"A lot of it was a blur," Wes said. "I've been waiting 19 years for this day — a lot of happiness and excitement."

There are 11 employees at Krimmer's Restaurant and some are Wes' childhood friends. "They have listened to me talk about this forever," Wes said.

As the 32-year-old prepared cauliflower puree, chopped tarragon, created sauces and checked the strawberry creme brulee in the oven Monday, he said he is a Waukesha County Technical College culinary school grad.

Wes wanted to own a restaurant when he was a little boy, his father Dave Krimmer said. He took it seriously as a teenager and was interested in what his mother Kim did in the kitchen, Dave said.

He was "Always inquisitive, always curious, always hands-on," Kim said.

His first food industry experience was as a fast-food employee.

"His job was at McDonald's and he said he was going to own a restaurant," his childhood friend Troy Dybul of West Bend said.

Before reaching his goal, Wes worked at fine-dining establishments including Mason Street Grill at the historic Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee. He cooked for stars including Wayne Newton, Oprah, Johnny Depp and Hillary Clinton, Dave said. "Everybody who was anybody was at the Pfister. When they came to town he made them dinner."

Wes became head chef at Milwaukee Chophouse at the Hilton. While he worked there, Dave worked the same shift at Master Lock in Milwaukee so they carpooled.

"We were driving to work and he said, 'I'm tired of making money for everybody else and want to make it for myself and my family,'" Dave said.

Soon after, Wes and Kelsey started seeking loans and they purchased the vacant building that had been the Canton House Chinese restaurant. Here's where the real work began.

"I would come back at midnight and bang on the walls until 5 in the morning," Wes said of working as a full-time chef and prepping his dream. "I owned a hammer and a screwdriver before that building."

Along with devoted friends and family including Kelsey's parents Bob and Lynn Fuge of West Bend, he learned the tools of the construction trade and his tool box began to fill up. The crew cleaned, drywalled, put in HVAC and electric, made a cooler and more. A garage became a staining area for "the gorgeous oak bar" that is a centerpiece of the restaurant, Wes said. They also made the tables.

Dybul, who stood up in Wes and Kelsey's wedding, was instrumental in reconstructing the building. "A lot of long restless nights," Dybul, who also works full time, said of the project. "When he has a goal in his head, he makes sure he sees it through. There were a lot of bumps in the road during the construction process that I don't think I would have been strong enough to make it through, but he did it."

Kelsey and Wes have two



John Ehke/Daily News

ABOVE: Owner and chef Wes Krimmer stands in the dining area near the bar Thursday afternoon at Krimmer's Restaurant in West Bend. The pairing of steak and wine restaurant will soon celebrate its one-year anniversary. **BELOW LEFT:** A look at the new exterior of Krimmer's Restaurant on Tuesday. **BELOW RIGHT:** A submitted photo of the building at 114 N. Main St. is shown before renovations.



children, Henry, 2, and Hazel, 3.

"In the process of building we got great news about Henry," Wes said. As an expecting mother, Kelsey worked until she couldn't.

Now she is front-of-the-house manager.

Kim was also instrumental and one day helped clean the yard behind the building. "I got poison ivy head to toe," she said with a laugh. That is not the only interesting renovation moment.

One night Dave and Wes were working and got so full of dust they stripped to their boxers to avoid making a mess in their vehicles, Dave said. They just hoped they wouldn't get pulled over on the way home.

"I can't believe this kid. He's so motivated, worked a full-time job, worked full time putting the restaurant together and getting up with two children," Dave said.

Mom, Dad and friends still help at the restaurant. When it opened, it was difficult finding qualified kitchen help, Wes said.

"It was me and Mom or just me — it was crazy," he said of prepping, cooking and getting food to the tables. Now he employs culinary students.

"I think it is the most fabulous thing and I look at it this way: 'How many times do you get to share in a dream?' We as a family got to see and work and help as a family to watch it unfold," Kim said.

The anniversary celebration is Feb. 25-27 and special sports guests will be on hand.

The menu and more
Though remodeling is over and he no longer works in Milwaukee,

Wes hasn't slowed down. Even when the restaurant is closed, he is prepping and doing whatever it takes, including scrubbing floors.

"We make everything from scratch. There are no canned products in this restaurant," Wes said.

Last summer, about 60 percent of the produce used at Krimmer's was from the family garden. Wes also requires a minimum of seven dozen flowers adorning the restaurant each day and many are on the bar, which has an extensive selection of wines and other libations.

Butter is another evolving item. Customers get regular butter with their bread along with a butter of the day — strawberry butter was Monday's treat. Others have included cinnamon, orange and rosemary. There have been minor menu tweaks since opening and there may be more but the goal remains — to bring out bold fresh flavors, Wes said.

The menu includes main dishes such as herb-crusted lamb chops, salmon, trout, scallops, steaks, lobster and a dry-aged (22 days) bone-in ribeye, which is a favorite among guests, Wes said.

"Seafood is flown in two to three times a week from Florida or California," Wes said. "It's on the boat and it comes to me the next day."

Appetizers include crab cakes, oysters Rockefeller and steak forks. There are a number of sides including tempura-battered asparagus and creamed corn with parmesan, peppers and bacon.

"The lobster mac and cheese is the die for," Dybul said.

They offer desserts, too, and Kim



Photo submitted by Dave Krimmer

The interior of Canton House before it was remodeled for Krimmer's.

said Wes uses a family favorite.

"Peanut butter cheese cake is my recipe but improved," Kim said.

When it opened, Krimmer's employed eight people and only one has left. They've since hired more and family and friends who helped remodel the building also help in the bar, kitchen and dining room when needed.

"I can be strict if things aren't going the way they need to go," Wes said. "This is my dream, this is my income, this is something I want to do the rest of my life."

Though he sported black-and-white checkered pants Monday, once his one-year anniversary hits, his wardrobe will consist of black pants. "They mean you are a true chef," he said.

"You don't see a lot of chef/owners and I think that's why we can have the product we do," he said.

Hours are 5-10 p.m. Monday-Saturday and closed Sundays. Contact the restaurant at 262-346-8454 or email manager@krimmersrestaurant.com. Visit Krimmer's Restaurant, a pairing of steak and wine, online at www.krimmersrestaurant.com.

"We are going to be the best restaurant in Wisconsin some day," Wes said.

It may be a ways out but the goal: "We're trying to do five properties, not all fine-dining restaurants," Wes said. "We have lots of ideas."

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