



Red Hen Offering Egg-cellent Food and Service

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By Jonathan Copsey / STAFF

The owners of the Red Hen Café clearly love eggs. Eggs of all shapes and sizes, chickens and cockerels are scattered about the entire restaurant, leading a customer to wonder: are eggs really that good?

Only at the Red Hen.

Newly opened, the Red Hen Café's owners, David Rutledge and Jason Meinhardt, have very clear goals about food and customer service: be the best.

Rutledge, the business side of the partnership, spent most of his life working in restaurants, starting as a dishwasher in New York City and working his way up to management, which came naturally to him.

"I realized that I had a knack for it," said Rutledge. "It kind of came easy. I understood how a restaurant should function." Being in the business for so long, it was only natural for Rutledge to want to open his own restaurant, but he decided that New York was just not the place. So he came to Atlanta.

"It was my passion, it's what I knew. It's what I have been doing for the last 10 years," he said. "I knew I wasn't going to open a carwash or anything I didn't know anything about. I enjoy customer service. And a restaurant allows you to really get to know people, especially in a small community like this."

It was while he was serving as general manager for the Flying Biscuit breakfast restaurant in Decatur that Rutledge met Meinhardt.

Meinhardt was a lot like Rutledge – both had lived in New York and both had a passion for restaurants. Only, where Rutledge was keen on the business side of things, Meinhardt had a passion for food.

Originally an actor, Meinhardt did what most actors do: bus tables while waiting for parts. It didn't take long to realize that he loved the business, with cooking being a family habit; both his grandmother and his father love to cook.

"I started developing a love for it," Meinhardt said. "I'm mostly self-taught and I've worked under some really good chefs."

With both New Yorkers together in Atlanta with similar dreams and complementing talents, it seemed only natural for them to go into business with each other. And so they started Red Hen Café.

It's not your typical breakfast/ lunch eatery. Looking down the menu, one could see names that are vaguely familiar. For starters, the French fries, a dear staple to lunchtime food, are served with parmesan cheese and fresh herbs. A quiche is made of artichokes and cheddar cheese.

The menu was composed by Meinhardt and Rutledge asking friends and family what they would like to see on a menu, then using those same friends and family to test the results. Each dish has Meinhardt's touch to it and each is made from scratch of fresh ingredients.

While some menu items might seem odd at first thought, the customers have almost all left happy and willing to return. One couple comes in practically every day; the woman gave Meinhardt a large hug as she left.

"They loved the food," he said. "I certainly didn't expect that. Talk about pride and satisfaction."

And really, that's all the Red Hen is about: taking pride in their work and satisfying customers. As Rutledge said, "Our goal every day is to do what we do and try and do it well."

The Red Hen Café is located at 5310 Windward Parkway, Alpharetta. For more information, visit www.theredhencafe.com or call 678-297-0200.



David Rutledge (left) and Jason Meinhardt run The Red Hen Café in Alpharetta, serving breakfast and lunch daily.