

SPOTLIGHT

Exhibit 31

Original Biscuits owner opens a new location

By Paul Maryniak, AFN Executive Editor

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Ahwatukee restaurateur Lloyd Melton, left, and Luis Hernandez own the new Biscuits restaurant in Sun Lakes.

Pablo Robles/AFN Staff Photographer

Lloyd Melton has a motto for his Original Biscuits Restaurants that promises “good old-fashioned cooking” the way it was meant to be.™

It also seems it was meant to be that he finally would realize a long-held dream of landing a location in Sun Lakes.

“I’ve been going out there a lot,” explained the Lakewood resident, “and I always said I’d love to have a location out here, but there was never any place available. I wasn’t going to build but if I could find a building, I would do it. I’ve had a lot of restaurants, but I’ve never built one from scratch.”

And that opportunity came recently when he saw a vacant building that once housed a Kentucky Fried Chicken.

And this week, that building at 9542 E. Riggs Roads joins his Original Biscuits restaurants at 1815 E. Elliot Road, Tempe, and 4623 E. Elliot Road, Ahwatukee, in offering identical menus and hours: 7 a.m.-2 p.m. seven days a week, though on Friday hours are extended to make way for the all-you-can-eat fish fry, served noon-8 p.m.

And all three restaurants offer the same 10 percent discount any time for veterans and active military “something that Melton, himself a veteran, wouldn’t think of not offering.

Melton named his restaurants after the fluffy biscuits that, with the homemade gravy, have won numerous accolades in “best of” voting competitions.

Using local ingredients with no preservatives whenever possible, Melton prides himself on his breakfast and lunch items. “My food is a lot more like Paul Dean than lean cuisine,” he said.

His Southern style fish fry also has won numerous kudos and usually packs the house on Fridays with patrons who have become hooked on his use of 100 percent crackermeal breading on individually frozen pieces of Alaskan cod.

Also popular are his meatloaf and liver and onions, although he notes that his hamburgers and ribeye steaks have won awards, thanks to a secret rub that he has used in other restaurants he has owned. In all, Melton has owned eight different types of restaurants, picking up nine awards.

He also takes special pride in his staff, which he personally trains with an emphasis on efficiency and friendliness, schooling them in the best practices he’s developed over years in the restaurant business.

And he treats them well to keep staff turnover low, explaining, “Most of my employees have been with me five, six, nine, 10 years. They have a life. They come to work at 7 and go home at 2, so if their grandmother’s taking care of kids, they’re not out till 1 in the morning. Every

holiday, they're home.

"I feel so lucky with the staff I have," he said.

"Good help is hard to find. It's harder now than ever before," Melton said. "They've been offered a lot more money to go different places."

But most of his employees stay with him, he added, because "they know they're going to get treated with respect and get a fair wage."

"If you don't know that much about the restaurant business, it's hard to be successful at it," Melton said.

"You better know the front of the house, the back of the house and the outhouse. A lot of these places, you see them folding not long after they open up. You got an 87 percent failure rate. Unless you really love it or know it, I think you're not going to have a successful restaurant," he added.

Not surprisingly, surviving the pandemic was a monumental challenge.

He installed a drive-thru window at the Ahwatukee location to help keep his patrons when restaurants were forced to offer only takeout service last year.

"I have such a nice, loyal clientele and a lot of them kept coming," he said

And after restaurants were allowed to offer inside dining again, a grateful Melton was pleased to see his patrons return.

"All my regular customers, thank God, and my friends in the service " they all came back as soon as they could," Melton said. "I just am so lucky to have a very good, loyal customer base. It made it easier or better for me to survive."

That loyalty comes largely from the personal interest that Melton takes in the food because he knows that remains the main attraction.

Sometimes he will even work in the kitchen. Other times, he makes a surprise visit to his restaurants and taste tests to make sure his recipes are followed.

Above all, he notes, "My motto is give people good food at a fair price."

And he stresses quality at a reasonable price.

"You know, it takes money to make money," Melton reflected. "You can't give the guys cheap food and charge a high price."

"If I give people good food at a fair price and treat them right, they're going to come back. Why should they go anywhere else?"

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Information: originalbiscuitsrestaurants.com