

The Royal Bagel Leaves Lasting Impact

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PROVIDING CUSTOMERS WITH MORE THAN JUST BAGELS

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For over 20 years, The Royal Bagel was an Atlanta institution. When it opened in 1974, most locals didn't know what a bagel was. When the doors closed for the final time in 1997, the bagel shop founded by Michael, Kenny and Rose Yoss had been voted "Best of Atlanta" thirteen years running. So why did it close? Former co-owner Michael Yoss says, "It just got stale."

Michael was just 22 years old when he opened the bakery with his parents in Ansley Mall, which, when at its peak, employed 50 people. His father, Kenny, would hand out cookies to kids who came into the bakery, leaving many people with fond memories of the shop.

"As much as I was integral to the bakery, that business will always be known as Kenny and Rose's place. A lot of people don't know, but I opened the bakery with my folks," Michael says. "The things people remember are getting a cookie from my father or some student getting yelled at by my mother for acting foolish. I would venture to say that the business lasted because of what my parents were to everyone."

In the aftermath of the store closure, Michael worked as a courier and then started an Atlanta branch of his brother's company, selling computer supplies to local businesses. In 2000, just three short years after The Royal Bagel closed its doors, both Kenny and Rose passed away over a span of 12 days. It was a somber and poetic end for two people so deeply entrenched and beloved by the Atlanta Jewish community.

Although he doesn't make bagels anymore, he still misses The Royal Bagel and his parents with a passion and often reminisces about the old days of schmoozing with customers over a hot cup of coffee.

"I miss it. I miss the people. I miss that sense of community," Michael says. "There were a bunch of reasons why we closed in 1997, certainly not the least of which was competition. The McDonalds of bagel franchises were opening all around. In my biased opinion, none of them compared to ours, but it was so much easier for people to get to those bakeries. Ansley Mall was difficult to get in and out of, and a lot of people didn't want to do that anymore."

However, the memory of Royal Bagel lives on through Michael's current venture, Yoss Baking. He started the wholesale bakery out of his kitchen in 2002. Today, the bakery sells to restaurants, hotels and even Delta Airlines. He started with just cheesecakes but has gradually increased his product line to include pies, cakes, and tiramisu. Yoss Baking has operated out of its own building in Norcross for nine years now. Michael still takes a hands-on approach to his work and likes to establish a relationship with each customer just like The Royal Bagel did.

"Generally, I do all the deliveries for Yoss because I want to go back and see each and every customer. Yoss Baking is not just a faceless company. I want customers to see the owner, which is what The Royal Bagel was all about. You knew who you were dealing with on a daily basis."

The Royal Bagel opened in 1974 and, over the course of its 22 year operation, it became a special place because of Michael and his parents Kenny and Rose. It was so special that people still talk about it today, 17 years after its closing.

Editor's note: For more information about The Royal Bagel, visit the tribute site that Michael has created, theroyalbagel.com. For more information about Yoss Baking, visit yossbaking.com.