

# Lansing State Journal

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## LOCAL

# Restaurant closures mount in Greater Lansing. Here are the ones we know about

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*This is part of a series highlighting Lansing-area restaurants adapting to the threat of COVID-19 and a new normal.*

Michelle Bryant thinks of the recent closure of Cops Cafe & Bakery, the eatery she co-owned in Delta Township, like she would the death of a loved one.

"It's a loss," Bryant said. "It's like when you lose a family member."

When Bryant and Heidi Williams opened the cafe just over two years ago, then as Cops & Doughnuts — Capital Precinct, the popular Clare-based "100% cop owned" bakery's seventh location and first franchise, the community embraced it.

In late February, Bryant and Williams parted ways with Cops & Doughnuts and renamed the eatery Cops Cafe & Bakery.

"We had different philosophies," said Bryant, a retired detective with the Lansing Police Department.

The cafe added new menu items, and pressed on. Then COVID-19 arrived in Michigan.

Without a drive-through window to accommodate pick-up orders, Bryant said opening for carryout didn't seem logical. Their cafe closed its doors March 18. Bryant said at the time they thought it would be temporary.

In the days and weeks that followed many of the cafe's regular customers who work at offices near its spot on Centurion Drive began working from home. Their visits to the cafe sustained the business, Bryant said, and many of those customers are still working remotely.

Bryant said she and Williams applied for loans but never got them, but they still believed they could reopen in June.

"You kind of take it a week at a time," she said. "I really thought that we would open in early June but then in talking to my employees everyone was really concerned about coming back that soon."

The permanent closure of Cops Cafe & Bakery was announced June 2.

"The community had been very supportive," Bryant said. "They're disappointed. We're disappointed, but we believe things happen for a reason."

The cafe is among a growing list of restaurant and cafe closures in Greater Lansing that have happened during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Here's a look at the restaurants and coffee shops the Lansing area has lost since mid-March:

## **Cantina Eastwood**

Cantina Eastwood closed in March, after the state's restaurants were ordered to suspend dine-in service. The space was previously home to Tony Sacco's, which closed in November of 2016.

American Bistro opened in the 4,500-square-foot space next to Capital Prime at 2328 Showtime Dr. June 15.

## **Finley's Grill & Smokehouse**

The West Saginaw Highway restaurant in Delta Township had been growing its catering business for the past five years, according to a post on the eatery's Facebook page in May that announced the restaurant's closure.

"It is to the point where the majority of our sales are generated through catering; consequently as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have decided to focus just on the catering business going forward and we will cease operations at the restaurant located at 7433 West Saginaw Highway," read the May 19 post. "It is with deep regret that we have to take these steps; however, it is the way our business is evolving."

According to Beverly Schmuldt, marketing and administrative assistant at River City Food Company, the Grand Rapids-based company that owned the eatery, two other Finley's Grill &

Smokehouse locations in Battle Creek and Kalamazoo will remain open.

## **Taps 25 and Good Slice Pizza Co.**

"Hello friends, we have some bad news to report," owner Jerome White wrote on Facebook on June 29. "Effective immediately, Taps 25 and Good Slice Pizza Co. are no more. It's been an amazing eight years and through Taps, I have met some of my favorite people of all time. Thank you to our amazing staff and guests that have held the bar down over the years. The people that made Taps what it is/was have meant the world to us and it is painful to have to say goodbye. If you know of a bar or restaurant that is looking for some great people, we have some bartenders and managers that would make great additions to the team. ... We love you all and look forward to the chance to spill a pint with you at the next stop."

White opened Taps 25 at 414 E. Michigan Ave., with his partners on April 28, 2012. He opened Good Slice Pizza Co. next door on June. 1, 2019.

White said he wasn't quite ready to talk about closing up shop when reached for an interview.

"I'd give a more emotional response than I'd like to be known by. I'm pretty bummed to be honest," he said.

## **Cops Cafe & Bakery**

"It's a sad day at the Cops Cafe," owners Michelle Bryant and Heidi Williams wrote in a Facebook post June 2. "We have made the tough decision to close permanently. We would like to thank all of our loyal customers for supporting us these last 2 years. We've loved getting to know you all and have thoroughly enjoyed serving you. Please be good to each other & support your local businesses. They need all of our support now more than ever."

The eatery, at 6427 Centurion Drive just off Croyts Road, opened in May of 2018.

## **Fireside Grill**

In late May, Fireside Grill owner Ed Hall said the Dimondale restaurant was on the verge of closure.

He wasn't optimistic about its survival then. The Lansing Road business didn't reopen in June when Gov. Gretchen Whitmer relaxed dine-in restrictions that had been in place since

March.

Hall said he made the decision to close permanently "a few weeks ago," after talking with staff at his bank.

Hall said the fallout of restaurant restrictions put in place state-wide will continue as the local economy struggles to rebound.

"There are still going to be people going out of business," he said. "After this don't think there won't be. People can't sustain their business at half."

## **Espresso Royale Coffee**

The coffee shop chain with roots in East Lansing that date back more than 30 years announced plans to close for good on its website in early June.

Jonathan Martin, the company's CFO, said the shutdown of college campuses, which provided much of Espresso Royale's business, hit the stores hard.

"Some would say that a company that goes out of business has failed; we don't think so," the company said. "Since 1987, Espresso Royale has served excellent coffee to millions of customers, has provided good work for thousands of people, and has purchased millions of dollars of goods and services from businesses around the country. We think that's a success."

## **The Brunch House**

Leo Farhat, owner of The Brunch House, confirmed that the pandemic resulted in the closure of his South Pennsylvania Avenue restaurant.

The eatery was open for a decade before closing March 16.

"Unfortunately it's gone on a lot longer, with so many questions about this pandemic, that I was pretty happy with the decision," Farhat told the State Journal in May.

## **For Crêpe Sake**

For Crêpe Sake's South Washington Square location closed its doors in early April and it won't reopen, co-owner Mike Mudrey said, but there's a silver lining.

Mudrey and his wife, Gina, signed a lease in February for a 2,000-square-foot space on M.A.C. Avenue in East Lansing that was previously home to Mackerel Sky Gallery of

Contemporary Craft.

The couple will "push forward 'full steam ahead' with the new location in East Lansing," Mudrey said in an email to the State Journal.

"We are very excited about this opportunity and whatever else the future may hold," he said.

## **Mijo's Diner**

MiJo's Diner, a North Grand River Avenue eatery that's been in business more than 20 years, announced it would close permanently in March shortly after dine-in service was restricted.

"This was a difficult choice, but we believe it was the right decision..." its owners wrote in a post on the business' Facebook page.

## **Frاندor Deli**

Frاندor Deli closed permanently in May. It had been at its location on North Clippert Street for 38 years.

**If you know of a restaurant that's closed recently or is considering shutting its doors permanently, email us: [rgreco@lsj.com](mailto:rgreco@lsj.com) or [gcouch@lsj.com](mailto:gcouch@lsj.com).**

*Contact Rachel Greco at [rgreco@lsj.com](mailto:rgreco@lsj.com). Follow her on Twitter @GrecoatLSJ. Contact Graham Couch at [gcouch@lsj.com](mailto:gcouch@lsj.com). Follow him on Twitter @Graham\_Couch.*