

RICHMAID RESTAURANT

FAMILY, CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND HOME-MADE GOODNESS

WRITTEN BY JUDY GOPPERT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEE YATES



Sometimes our paths are laid out for us through circumstances and life-changing events. This is how Gary and Janet Crow came to own Richmaid Restaurant.

“Gary and I celebrated our 21st anniversary at the Richmaid on April 1. No kidding,” Janet noted. “Gary worked in restaurants up and down the Valley, which brought him back to Lodi. Carrows is where we met in 1985. Back in 1998, we were looking to open our own restaurant so we could work together. We were raising our children working opposite hours sometimes. I was a waitress and Gary managed a restaurant in Old Sacramento, working long hours. We lived in Galt at that time, where I grew up and graduated from high school.”

Taking a Leap of Faith

Tragically, their 15-year-old son was killed in an accident in 1997, and they decided it was time for a change; they wanted to work together as a family. Happenstance brought them to the Richmaid building, sitting empty. Feeling God had a plan for their family, they cleaned the place up, helped by friends, and opened the doors April 1, 1998.

“It was so busy and overwhelming at first. Our daughter, Michelle, worked for us at age 16 and waited tables. Our son, Zac, helped out on dishes at 14 and our daughter, Kimberly, was bussing tables at age 11,” she smiled. “We never looked back, kept moving forward and continued to grow our business. We have seen customers pass on to glory, watched babies coming in with their parents and grow into young adults and beyond. Some became a part of the Richmaid team.”

Michelle was manager for ten years while

raising her two sons, and now she works full time for her church. Kim still works with them and has a huge customer following. “I’m thrilled to work side-by-side with her and although there are challenges working with relatives and tempers rise when things go south, I wouldn’t trade our time for anything,” Janet affirmed. Kim is on maternity leave currently with her third daughter, Kate, and also has Madison and Macy. “Gary and I feel truly blessed as grandparents and the holidays around the Crow house are special!”

Creating a Local Icon

She credits her wonderful team of employees, some of whom have been with them for over 20 years. “This says a lot about loyalty and keeping the consistency in food preparation and service. All our recipes are home-made, and some are actually from our parents and grandparents, including the house dressing, barbecue sauce, meat loaf and soups.

“When we first opened, Gary and I would make the dinner specials in the afternoon ourselves and take a little nap upstairs before beginning the dinner service. They were long days and we had a smaller crew then, but have grown our staff to 28 today,” she continued. “We are thankful for all our employees and strive to give the best to our customers.”

For Kim, growing up working with her parents has been an amazing learning experience. “The true meaning of life is to love others and enjoy every moment. It’s been an amazing journey; I met my husband here while I was still in high school. We have three beautiful girls, the youngest was just born April 12 and I am enjoying the beauty in her as I know she

will grow so fast. The newborn stage is trying, but when I see her beautiful face my motherly instinct kicks in and we get through the sleepless nights. I am going to take some time off to be with my sweet baby girl and our other two girls to enjoy them. I will miss working alongside my parents and seeing all of my customers who are like family. I have gotten an amazing outpouring of love from all of them as I have departed to have this baby. I truly feel so blessed to call them family. It’s not a job for me; it’s my home away from home. I will be back, though! Until then I will make the occasional pop in to say hi!”

Perfect Place to Celebrate Mom!

“Mother’s Day is the time we launch our fresh strawberry waffles. We buy fresh strawberries from here in Lodi. It’s a fun way to welcome spring,” Janet reflected. “We serve them up along with fresh strawberry shortcake with all our dinners throughout summer.” The broasted chicken they began serving two years ago is a big hit, and they recently added a second broaster to keep up with the demand.

“All in all, the last 21 years have been the best days of our lives. We have grown our family, our friends, our business and our faith,” she added. “God is good, and I wouldn’t change anything!” ■

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Richmaid Restaurant is located at 100 S. Cherokee Lane, Lodi, California. Call them at 209-368-4279 or visit richmaidrestaurant.com.