

Everybody's ready to

Restaurants reopen doors for dine-in service after governor's

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Ron Miller Jr., whose family has owned Little Pigs BBQ for nearly 30 years, described the reopening Monday of his Seneca and Easley locations as “exciting, confusing and a little bit of everything.”

“We’re still trying to figure out the best way to do it to keep everybody safe, and (we’re) really kind of looking to see what some of the other restaurants are doing in preparing to reopen,” he said. “It’s kind of day-to-day, and that’s the way it’s been the last eight weeks. You come in and find out what’s new and what has to be done differently, and we just make those adjustments.”

The latest adjustment came Monday, when Gov. Henry McMaster’s executive order forbidding indoor restaurant dining

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order lifted



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James Peters, left, and Cody Rogers wait for their food beside a table closed for social distancing purposes at Little Pigs BBQ on Monday afternoon.

get out'

RESTAURANTS: 'I missed the interaction coming in'

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was lifted as of 12:01 a.m., allowing restaurants to resume dine-in service for customers so long as certain guidelines are met in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those guidelines include allowing only 50 percent of posted occupancy as determined by fire marshals, tables being spaced 6 to 8 feet apart, additional cleaning and sanitizing guidelines for equipment, tables, chairs and so forth, additional guidelines for health checks for all employees and social distancing guidelines for employees and customers.

Miller said he feels his customers will be anxious to return "to some normalcy" through the dine-in option.

"I know people are ready to get out there," he said. "Word on the street is that people are ready to sit back down and have a night out of their own kitchen and off their own couch.

"I'm with them — I'm ready."

Cody Rogers said he

is "really excited" about the return of the dine-in option.

"I missed the interaction coming in with people," he said. "We were eating out of a box in our truck each day, so that's been kind of rough."

Rogers said he has no worries about COVID-19, adding, "If I get the coronavirus, I get it."

"Honestly, it's a 98 percent recovery rate, and the flu's worse than that," he said. "I don't have any complications, so if I was sick or anything, I would just stay away — isolate yourself, instead of the whole population."

James Peters said he was also getting impatient with the executive order prohibiting indoor seating.

"It used to be I hated going out in public and being around a large crowd," he said. "Now it's what I want to do. It's weird how that works."

Marta Peay said she also doesn't have any qualms about COVID-19.

"Good hand-washing, making sure of that," she said. "I myself put it into

the Good Lord's hands. It's great to be able to talk to people and just socialize."

Michelle Miller said she is glad to not have to sit through the drive-thru line any longer.

"(It is nice) just being able to get in and get out fast (with dine-in), because we're in a hurry, we've got to go back to work," she said.

Bridget Owensby, who was with Peay and Miller, agreed.

"We only have an hour break," she said.

At 313 Café on U.S. Highway 123, Leslie Schweitzer was serving customers and felt grateful that she could offer dine-in service again. Some tables were marked off as unavailable to keep in compliance with social distancing guidelines.

"We're so happy," she said early Monday after-

noon. "It's been steady all day from the morning until now. We are so thankful and grateful. We're seeing more people."

She added that the restaurant is also working to expand and improve its outdoor dining area.

"We are actually redoing our outdoor area, just because the weather has been so beautiful," Schweitzer said. "We're making it look

a lot more friendly, cozy, cute and fun."

A group of Salon La Rouge employees were among those taking advantage of the dine-in opportunity at 313 during the lunch hour. McMaster announced Monday that salons would be among the businesses allowed to reopen next week.

"We're painting our hair salon since we're closed, so

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Ron Miller Jr.
Little Pigs BBQ owner

we're taking a lunch break and enjoying each other's company and get to sit and eat," Terry King said.

While some restaurants returned to dine-in service Monday, others have chosen to wait a little longer. Old Towne Pizza Buffet manager David Shugart said plans are to reopen at 11 a.m. Wednesday.

"I'm glad to get back to work and for people to get out and get back into the public," he said.

Seneca Family Restaurant plans to continue drive-thru and pickup service before reopening for dine-in next week. Owner Costas Bakogiannis said the interior has been painted in anticipation of customers returning for inside dining.

"We're all ready, the girls are ready, I'm ready to see my customers — I miss it, everyone does," he said. "The phone's been ringing like crazy, but we want to make sure everything's situated and being done right. Everybody's ready to get out."