

ALL ROADS lead to: **Bowlus**

Editor's note:
Throughout June, July and August, the Sauk Rapids Herald will feature interesting people and places from our neighboring cities.

Jordie's Trailside Café: **A must-stop along Soo Line Recreational Trail**

Mother-daughter operation booming in popularity

BY TOM FENTON
STAFF WRITER

The Minnesota Twins radio broadcast echoed through the outdoor seating area as hungry customers enjoyed lunch on a picturesque summer day at Jordie's Trailside Café. The serenity of the scene epitomized Americana to the point it bordered on surreal.

Families and friends were enjoying dishes such as butterfly shrimp and chicken Caesar wraps while sipping ice tea, taking in the sights of colorful flowers and assorted artifacts. It is all part of the charm of Jordie's – a Bowlus staple since 2008 located a few dozen

steps from the Soo Line Recreational Trail.

Simply put: Jordie's is one of those places travelers not afraid to stray from the beaten path hope to encounter. There is nothing corporate about the Bowlus restaurant which oozes an old-time feel, and that is exactly how owners Jordie and Sonya Stay prefer it.

"The town has been so good to us," said Jordie Stay, who owns and operates the restaurant with her daughter, Sonya. "There was a lot of hard work, blood, sweat and tears that went into making this place. To recreate

one of the oldest buildings in town

into a destination point is special for all of us."

Jordie's is housed in a building that was completed in 1907 and has many original features, most notably the wooden trim located behind what used to be the bar of the Longtime Saloon. Jordie opened the bar in 1991 and operated it until leasing out the property in 2000.

In its early days, the building housed a dance hall where women spent their time upstairs and were not allowed on the main floor with the men. Sonya hears from people who fondly recall those days.

"Older people sometimes come in to talk and tell me it brings back memories," Sonya said. "Someone told me, 'I remember going up there with my girlfriends and one would get a stamp on their hand, then we'd lick our hands and stick them together so we wouldn't

have to pay another dime (to get in).' It's nice when people come back and get the hometown feeling of being back in Bowlus. We like to have the feeling of being at grandma's house when you come in."

In July 2008, Jordie decided to transform the building into a restaurant and asked Sonya, who has an extensive cooking background, for help. Jordie's Trailside Café was born a month later.

"Mom asked me for one year of my life to get this going," Sonya said after finishing the day's lunch rush. "And 14 years later, here I am. I had a cooking background, and she had the business-building sense. I was in between jobs and figured I'd give it a try. We had no idea what this would become."

The business has undoubtedly been spurred by the Soo Line Recreational Trail, a 10.5-mile path that starts near Royalton and continues southwest to Holdingford where it connects to the Lake Wobegon Trail.

"We rely on that bike trail during the summer to get us through the winter slow months," Jordie said. "I wouldn't want to do this without the trail, and they support us a lot."

The business has undergone several upgrades through the years on its way to becoming an area favorite. Despite a small kitchen, Sonya said her and the staff can efficiently handle crowds of up to about 150. They also plan to soon open a small bed and breakfast called the Soo Line Sleep Easy in a nearby building that used to house a bank.

On Memorial Day in 2009, construction began on creating an outdoor dining area that features flowers and a mini waterfall. Bikers often take a break in the park across the street, many of whom end up at Jordie's to take in the surroundings while enjoying the food.

The menu features an array of sandwiches, wraps and craft burgers,



A popular choice on the menu at Jordie's Trailside Café in Bowlus is the 1907 burger along with a side of homemade, hand-dipped onion rings. The burger was named after the year the building that houses the restaurant was built.



PHOTOS BY TOM FENTON

The mother-daughter team of Jordie and Sonya Stay opened Jordie's Trailside Café in Bowlus in August 2008. The iconic restaurant has been a popular stop for bikers on the Soo Line Recreational Trail and for travelers from all over Minnesota.

including the 1907 burger which got its name from the year the building was completed. The onion rings hand-battered in Jordie's house garlic Parmesan butter are a huge favorite. Ice cream and Sonya's homemade pies and cakes normally are quick to disappear from the dessert cooler.

"I like producing beautiful product, cooking it fast and making it look great," Sonya said. "I love it when people take pictures of my food and post it or when people see their food and they say, 'Oh my gosh.' That makes me feel great."

Jordie's page 4



Sonya Stay checks on a pair of freshly-baked pies during a recent lunch rush at Jordie's Trailside Café in Bowlus. The dessert cooler is one of the more popular attractions at the restaurant.

JORDIE'S
TRAIL SIDE CAFE
& CATERING

**Come for
the food,
stay for the
company**

Delicious homemade food, coffee and pie, oh my!
Nestled along side the Soo Line Bicycle trail

320-584-8193 Check out our Facebook page for specials!

105 1st Ave S, Bowlus, MN 56314

P20-1B-JO

Jordie & Sonya Stay
OWNERS
jts2008@live.com

