

Cafe Revives Lunch Options at Madison County Building

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE — Brandon Greene likes to experiment in the kitchen, and sometimes even his wife, Lauren, questions what he's cooking up.

Then people taste it.

The jalapeno popper cheeseburger is one example. Lauren admits she looked at Brandon like he was crazy when he first came up with the idea.

“There's a lot of flavors in that burger, but they all complement each other really well,” Brandon said.

That willingness to put a twist on familiar favorites is now on display at D&D Cafe inside the Madison County Administration Building, where Brandon and Lauren Greene recently took over the cafeteria.

The couple plans to serve made-to-order food with what Brandon describes as a “foodie-style twist on classic American cuisine.”

“One word I would use to describe my cooking style is flavor,” Brandon said. “We pride ourselves on offering fresh food, not pre-bought foods anyone could make.”

Getting behind the counter full time took a winding path.

For the past six years, Brandon worked in the steel and labor industry. He also spent 10 years as a Granite City reserve police officer and eight years working at the St. Louis County Justice Center.

Through it all, the kitchen kept calling.

He started cooking for family and friends before creating his own barbecue sauce and dry rub in 2023. Soon, people regularly began asking for his food, sauce and seasoning.

Success in chili cookoffs added fuel to the fire. Brandon competed in several competitions and brought home multiple wins, helping convince the couple that cooking could become something bigger.

“After competing and winning multiple chili cookoffs, it gave me confidence to think this may be something we want to do for the long haul,” he said.

Then a friend told them about the available cafeteria space in the Madison County Administration Building. At that point, they had officially operated their food business for only about five months.

They decided to take a chance.

“We figured it couldn’t hurt to try and apply for the space,” Brandon said. “We knew if we were awarded the space, we were going to give it everything we had with no regrets.”

For Brandon, the timing felt right.

“Having a full-time food business has been a dream of mine since I was a young boy,” he said.

Lauren brings the business side to the partnership. The couple previously dabbled in real estate while Lauren spent much of her time raising their three children. As a family, they enjoy traveling, exploring parks and nature trails — and, appropriately, trying different restaurants.

Now they are building a destination of their own.

Along with the jalapeno popper cheeseburger, another favorite is the Firehydrant Dog, an original creation that Brandon said often catches customers by surprise.

“We’ve heard a lot of, ‘That’s the best hot dog I’ve ever had,’ which is always a good feeling,” he said.

There’s also a story behind the dog featured in the business logo.

That’s Tyson.

Tyson, the family dog and Brandon’s longtime companion, died in 2024. During Brandon’s years of shift work, the two spent countless hours together, including plenty of time in the kitchen where Tyson routinely “yapped” at Brandon while he cooked.

“He is deeply missed, but his legacy will now live on forever through our business,” Lauren said.

Since opening the cafe, the Greenes said county employees and visitors have made them feel at home.

“Everyone has been super welcoming,” Lauren said. “You can tell everyone was missing having the kitchen open. It feels good to be appreciated.”

Madison County Board Chairman Chris Slusser welcomed the Greenes to the county and said employees are glad to once again have a food option inside the Administration Building.

“We’re excited to welcome Brandon and Lauren to Madison County,” Slusser said. “Our employees really enjoy having a place right here in the building where they can grab lunch, and D&D Cafe brings something new and fun to the cafeteria. We’re glad to have them here and wish them a lot of success.”

The Greenes also plan to continue catering and participating in festivals, food competitions, holiday celebrations, private events and other gatherings.

Looking ahead, they want to establish the cafe as an Edwardsville staple with a fun atmosphere that reflects their family and business. A food trailer or another permanent location could eventually follow.

For now, they want county employees and visitors to take a break from the workday and discover something different.

“We want employees and visitors to experience food they may have never had before,” Lauren said. “I think because we enjoy what we do so much, people can take away from that. It’s also a nice break from the busy workday.”

For the Greenes, opening the cafe represents more than another business venture.

“We give all the glory to God for this opportunity to turn a dream into something real,” they said. “We are ready to work hard, stay busy, have a good time and serve food we’re proud of.”

And Brandon has a simple invitation for anyone wondering what’s cooking downstairs.

“Let’s roll! Come eat!”