

June 28th will be Manna Cafe's last day.

Please understand - this is the hardest moment of our lives. It is the most difficult thing we have ever done, or imagined we would do. It was difficult news for our staff to hear and digest, and we are devastated by the challenges they will face, especially during the pandemic. We have loved this business - made especially wonderful through the teamwork and camaraderie that exist in these walls. Even as we head into our last days together, our devoted crew is working hard to make our exit a happy one - a Celebration of Life, as it were.

Just as difficult and saddening is the effect we know this closing has on our huge family of customers, and on Manna's place in the Northside community. We opened our doors because of our love of making people happy through food - simple as that - and we wanted to share that most of all with OUR neighborhood. Over the years Manna's "neighborhood" grew to encompass so much more, geographically, and we have been, and remain, deeply thankful for your love and support.

A week before the coronavirus officially, hit we (Barb and Mike) left for a trip to New York to visit our son. Manna was thriving, and nothing was out of the ordinary. But one week later, we returned early from the trip to a Manna closed by necessity. We, the staff, and the country were baffled and confused by the sudden and overwhelming changes, and it took a minute to grasp it all (if we even have).

In the beginning, the driving force became about keeping a path open for Manna to reopen on the other side, and our staff to return. We wanted to help as best as we could in the interim, gathering tip money for those who could not come to Manna, and helping staff in as many other ways as we could.

In the beginning, we looked ahead to the possibilities, and felt that with the dedicated handful of staff helping out, we could possibly survive a month, maybe two, of severely restricted business. And we all gave it our best. We are overwhelmingly grateful to the staff who pitched in from the get-go, despite their fears about the virus, and the uncertainty of whether their efforts would pay off.

But the effects of coronavirus will be with us much longer than anyone once thought - and they have rippled through our community in ways that'll affect peoples' lives permanently. We all felt it was too early to open for sit-down service - particularly in Manna's close environment. Our staff was not ready for the risk, and frankly, despite the "permission" to reopen at 25% from the City, we all felt it was a premature choice for safety and health reasons.

After considering the many factors that affect us, both personally, and in the business, we have decided we must close. Manna is a hustly-bustly sort of place. The physical and operational changes necessary to remain open in the long run are many. Not only are we faced with being open only at partial capacity for a long while, but it may be much longer still until customers are ready to return to a crowded restaurant scene.

Perhaps someone will breathe new life into our little place, with fresh ideas and energy, and a paradigm shift that addresses the new world we now live in. Meantime, we will cherish the memories you have helped us make.

We love our customers, and cannot imagine a Madison without Manna. We love our staff, and cannot imagine not seeing them each day, sharing our lives and dreams and fears and loves. We cannot imagine no oatcakes, or rugelach or Benny's or Pratzel's corn tzizel rye bread or breakfast burritos or sticky buns or.....

Thank you for the memories, the enthusiasm, the care, the friendship...we will miss it all!

Barb and Mike