

Magnolia Grille
Casual Family Dining
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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Columbia's Magnolia Grille Brings Back Spirit of Former Family Restaurant with a Few Twists

Columbia, MS (January 11, 2016) – Ronnie Lott is a name most folks around Columbia, Mississippi associate with good food and family dining. Now, those feelings will once again be rekindled with the rebirth of food, family, and fellowship in a brand new eatery that will bring a veteran restaurateur out of retirement and back into the kitchen.

Former Jack's Family Restaurant owners Ronnie and Nora Lott are poised to open a new restaurant, Magnolia Grille just north of Highway 98 behind the Wal-Mart Supercenter, just after the first of the year. While there will be a few changes, Magnolia Grille will have many of the same features as Lott's former Jack's, including a fully-arrayed salad bar.

"Our salad bar was the face of Jack's and it's going to be the face of Magnolia Grille," says Lott. "The two questions I'm asked most are, 'When will you all be open?' and 'Will there be a salad bar?'"

Ronnie and Nora Lott's roots in Marion County run deep and long. After serving in World War II, Nora's father returned to Columbia and opened Jack's Sandwich Shop in downtown in 1948. Ronnie himself served three tours of duty in Vietnam as a Seabee from 1969 to 1971; after returning, he and Nora bought the sandwich shop from her father in 1972.

The Lotts operated the sandwich shop until 1984 when they closed it to pursue other work. But they soon discovered they loved and missed the restaurant business and decided to open Jack's Family Restaurant in 1990.

“Running a restaurant everyday is like getting ready for a game – you do all your preparation; then you open your door and there’s a rush of orders that need to go out and in a way that’s satisfying to the customers,” says Lott. “It’s a competition with yourself to do the best you can. I suppose it just gets in your blood.”

From the very beginning, the restaurant lived up to its “family” name. “We were definitely a family-run business. Our daughter Suzanne has worked with us since she was big enough to stand on a stool to fix drinks,” says Lott. “And I believe that feeling extended to our customers – many regulars would come with their children, and then years later those same children would bring their own kids to dine with us.”

But after serving customers for years, in 2011 the family businessman thought he’d like to have more time to focus on life away from a business that often demands an owner’s attention 7 days a week nearly every day of the year. Lott was at an age when most people retire. So, that’s what he did – for a while.

“Retirement isn’t all it’s cracked up to be,” he says. “I’m still in good health, so sitting at home after spending so many years working in the public just wasn’t that enjoyable to me.”

He also found people wanted Jack’s to come back. Although it was no longer possible at the former location, they decided it was time. And although the name and place are different, Lott says Magnolia Grille will still have the same philosophy that defined Jack’s.

“Good food, good service and a clean restaurant – those are the hallmarks of a successful restaurant.”

Regulars at the former restaurant will find familiar items on the new menu, like fried catfish, shrimp, steaks and, of course their signature salad bar. But Lott promises a few other additions like an expanded appetizer menu and a new pork steak that resembles a beef rib eye in cut and quality.

In their larger building, they’ll also offer more room for a service that Lott believes is sorely needed in the Columbia area – reasonable and affordable in-house catering for receptions.

“We’ll be able to host any kind of function with food – from light hors d'oeuvres to prime rib – and serve up to 300 people,” says Lott. “This is something we couldn’t do as much before because of limited space. We often had to turn down requests, especially at Christmas time.”

Lott says the large reception area, known as The Magnolia Room, at Magnolia Grille will also have a stage for conference-style meetings. The table setup will easily accommodate 200 diners. The space will also host an impressive separate entrance for private social functions.

But regardless of these additions, the new restaurant will have the same family atmosphere as Lott’s former one. His daughter Suzanne will assist him with managing the restaurant, while his granddaughters will serve as waitresses, the next generation carrying on the family tradition.

“Magnolia Grille will be a lot like my former place in one respect: it’ll be a place you can bring your family for a relaxing meal with good food and good service,” says Lott. “But it’s also going to be unique and special like what no one here has seen before.”

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The new Magnolia Grille is scheduled to open January 19th at 115 R.A. Johnson Drive, Columbia. For more information about Magnolia Grille hosting your next event in 2016, call 601-736-2222. You can also like Magnolia Grille on Facebook at facebook.com/magnoliagrillems

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