

Fork & Spoon Homestyle Kitchen:
Giving Everyone a Place at the Table
By Ruby West

Have you ever eaten at a restaurant where you get to *choose* how much to pay? That's the unique idea behind Fork & Spoon Homestyle Kitchen, a family-style restaurant in Bozeman, Montana that aims to break down social and economic barriers while also feeding those in need. The team of heroes who serve hundreds of healthy and delicious dinners each night are on a mission to eradicate hunger in a dignified manner.

Chef Rick Hilles prepares nutritious, family-friendly fare for a mix of guests including seniors who want to socialize, families who are down on their luck, and paying customers who want to support the social mission and enjoy a great meal. Front of House Manager Chelsea Eddy oversees the nearly 100 volunteers each week who keep the restaurant running smoothly and create the warm, inviting atmosphere. Heading up the team is Heather Grenier, CEO/President of the local organization HRDC, which oversees Fork & Spoon. In 2012, Grenier along with local churches led the creation of the restaurant after a mobile soup kitchen closed its doors.

More than 20% of the population in Bozeman currently lives below the federal poverty line. "Many people who come here are honest, hard-working people, and they're just in a jam," Chef Hilles explains. "We try to move their life in a positive direction." Grenier adds, "We wanted to shed the soup kitchen feel. By offering our customers the opportunity to pay, they don't have to feel like they're taking handouts. And many of them do. They pay a dollar, they pay a dime, and some days when it's going well for them, they'll pay the full price, or even pay it forward."

Many people benefit from the restaurant, and for some, it is the only place they can get a cooked meal. Thirteen-year-old Jarin and his mom Carrie became homeless after she left her abusive boyfriend, and they eat frequently at Fork & Spoon. "The cafe was a real game changer," Carrie shares. "As soon as I get housing I want to go volunteer there." Jessica, a 37-year-old mom, explains, "It's cool that they have the option to pay so when I can, I donate a little bit and that makes me feel a lot better about myself."

The remarkable result of Fork & Spoon is that there are paying customers sitting alongside people in need, everyone just enjoying a great meal. These community heroes have created a truly special place that temporarily breaks down those barriers. No matter what your story, there will always be a place at the table.

Sources:

<https://thehrdc.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/forkandspoonkitchen/>

<https://forkandspoonkitchen.org/>

<http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/bozeman-population/>

[Bozeman Magazine, "Putting the Community into Café" - 11-1-15](#)

Interviews:

Heather Grenier, CEO/President of HRDC

Rick Hilles, Head Chef at Fork & Spoon

Chelsea Eddy, Front of House Manager at Fork & Spoon

Jessica, Jarin and Carrie – guests of the restaurant