

KATIE SOUP & SALAD MAE'S

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A sign of a good delicatessen, family restaurant or diner is food prepared fresh and made to order. At Katie Mae's in Preston, all soups, sauces, and desserts are homemade; burgers and meatballs are hand-formed; and food is made to order.

Selecting a meal at Katie Mae's is a challenge. The menu is full of fresh, simple foods made better than you remember them. The one-stoplight town's only sit-down restaurant, Katie Mae's is a popular lunch spot for many of the town's daytime employees.

Make a trip to Preston for Katie Mae's cream of crab soup, a Maryland favorite. It's worth a half-a-day's drive, at least, for there are few cream of crab recipes that could com-

pete with this one. Full of crab flavor with a creamy — but not too thick — texture, the soup is buttery and rich, with crabmeat in every bite. Owner Kate Frase and her mother (and bookkeeper), Carol Frase, know the recipe, but it's a secret. Kate Frase traded a catering job for it and swore she would never share it. The recipe was worth the trade.

Balance the creaminess of the soup with a crisp salad. The grilled chicken grande salad is a warm chicken breast, bacon, and mozzarella cheese on a garden salad, with crisp, fresh lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, onions, and croutons.

The salads here are consistently fresh. The grilled chicken is tender and flavorful, so

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hot from the grill when it tops the salad that some of the mozzarella melts. The cheese is freshly grated at Katie Mae’s — even the pizza cheese.

Order it with ranch dressing, which, the way Katie Mae’s makes it, is fresh-tasting, creamy, and airy — almost frothy. Frase said the light texture is a result of whipping the dressing. Locals often ask to buy a cup of it alone.

Other homemade dressings available are ranch, blue cheese, and Caesar, and Frase makes other homemade sauces, as well, including a maple mayonnaise that pairs well with sweet potato fries and a raspberry inferno sauce that is the perfect partner to jalapeno poppers (order these). The restaurant also makes cocktail and tartar sauces from scratch.

“I really enjoy cooking,” Frase said. “I like food, and I like to eat out.”

Frase bought Katie Mae’s from the previous owner, Pamela Payne, in August 2011. She had worked for Payne for eight years before that.

After purchasing, Frase renamed the restaurant and began making it her own, focusing on more homemade foods and adding salads and wraps in response to a trend of healthy eating. She added breakfast in 2012. Sausage, scrapple, bacon, and home fries are cooked fresh daily. Every breakfast sandwich is made fresh to order.

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Frase likes to know what’s new with food and what other restaurants are doing, so she

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frequently dines at other restaurants. She enjoys being close to her employees and customers. Frase’s mother works alongside her, but Kate Frase said she considers her employees to be her family and treats her customers like family, as well.

“I love to eat — that’s thing number one,” Frase said. “But, number two, because we’re in a small town, I know almost all of my customers by name.”

Frase also gives back to the community. One night a month, 10 percent of her proceeds go toward a different charity. She has supported numerous youth activities, the March of Dimes, and others. Although she is open on Sunday during football season, the restaurant is available for fundraisers on Sundays during the off-season. She also closes on the first Sunday of each month so that she will not compete with the Preston Fire Company’s monthly fundraiser breakfast.

“We are a small community and we need to help each other out in this town,” Frase said. 🍷

