

Now, how do you fit 100 people into Phil and Jim's Delicatessen?

You don't have to taste a hoagie to determine if the sandwich shop is turning out a first-class, Grade-A, All-American Delaware County hoagie. You can smell it.

Take last Thursday for instance. That's the day the wind was howling through the county like a runaway freight train. As I approached Phil and Jim's Delicatessen on Edgmont Avenue in Parkside, the door opened as a customer walked out. The aroma was sucked out of the shop and blew into my face at about 40 miles per. The fragrance was so powerful — a mixture of cheeses, salami, oil, onions and sage — that I could have saved myself the price of a sandwich simply by taking a deep breath and not exhaling.

Right away you knew Phil and Jim's was the real deal. You know that hoagies are made there only like they are made in the county, and that means they are the very best-tasting in the entire world.

I have to admit Phil and Jim's is not on my regular hoagie stop list, although it has been around forever and I've never heard a complaint. I even knew one of the former owners, **Jimmy Landis**, now making a ton with his catering firm in Radnor. The stop this day was to talk with the current proprietor, **Gus Guasperini**, about the white-tie-and-tails function he is catering tonight.

Well, maybe not white-tie-and-tails but certainly a cut or two above, sartorially speaking, of the T-shirt-and-jeans crowd that usually packs the place.

Because he is such a nice man, Gus (Chester High '56) reluctantly agreed to cater a wedding-rehearsal dinner, of all things, for an old customer, **Jannis Swerman**, who grew up just a few blocks away on Parkway Avenue in Chester. A free spirit by all accounts, Jannis thought it would be great fun to let Gus and the guys cater her rehearsal dinner. Hopefully her intended, **Dr. Don Rubinstein**, agreed, not that it really matters.

The menu will consist entirely of Gus' famous steaks and hoagies, plus Tastykakes and birch beer. This, despite the fact that Jannis works in California for the world-renowned chef, **Wolfgang Puck**, and manages a trendy restaurant of her own in Malibu.

When Guasperini got into the business more than 35 years ago, he never envisioned anything like this. He was doing shift work at Scott Paper, a steady but unglamorous job. His pal, the late **Tony Tancredi**, wasn't too happy with his profession as a barber either. At the time, Phil and Jim's actually had a Phil and a Jim. "Phil" was **Phil Cerami**, who never really worked the business, only backed it financially. "Jim" of course, was Jim Landis, the former Weinberg's softball flash.

So Gus and Tony bought in. Sadly, Tancredi passed away a few years later, and Guasperini has been the man ever since.

"I'm a little confused," Guasperini said while discussing the event. "Every time I ask for an estimate of the crowd, it goes up by about 20. Look at this," he said as he led the way into his adjacent luncheon room. "We can seat 30, maybe 35 people here. The last estimate I heard was 80 people. Where am I going to put them? It would help if I knew how many were coming."

I told Gus I had to call Jannis and would attempt to get a firm count.

Meanwhile, the father of the bride, the legendary architect **Jack Swerman**, was having troubles of his own. He showed up at synagogue services with a suit he proudly announced he would be wearing to the wedding.

Cecily Morris, wife of **Dr. Richard Morris**, is coordinating the rehearsal dinner. She's the one who thought flowers in empty kosher pickle jars on Gus' tables would lend a nice touch.

She took one look at Mr. Swerman's ill-fitting suit and said it never would do. Next, Mr. Swerman modeled a nifty tuxedo he owned. It fit great, but unfortunately moths appeared to be having a dinner of their own within its folds for the past 50 years. Cecily decided Mr. Swerman would be wearing a rented tux.

Where are you, **Irvin Stern**, now that we need you?

Plans are proceeding at something beyond break-neck speed. The event has all the appearances of the largest rehearsal dinner in Delaware County history.

Since parking at Phil and Jim's is a tad limited, buses will shuttle the celebrants from Ohav Shalom Synagogue in Wallingford to Parkside.

Gus is gearing up by asking all of his six full-time employees to be available, as well as most of his part-timers. His kids, son **Anthony** and daughter **Dina**, have volunteered their services.

He has asked that the wedding party not descend upon the sleepy little borough of Parkside until 7:30 p.m., at the earliest. "We're kind of busy on Saturday night before then," he explained.

By the way, I did talk to Jannis and I did get a more-or-less "firm" estimate on the number of guests Gus will be feeding. I know I promised him I would give him the number but when I heard it, I didn't have the heart.

How does the number 100 sound, Gus?

As for Jannis and Dr. Don, *mazel tov!*

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