

# Creating A NEW REVOLUTION

By Tamara Scully

## THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION WAS A PIVOTAL PERIOD IN UNITED STATES HISTORY,

as it was around most of the world, shaping the face of our country today. Cities boomed and factories produced massive amounts of goods, facilitated by the use of new machinery and made in the USA. Today the spirit of the era – one during which the average working man played a vital role – is celebrated at Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille, a new concept eatery that recently opened in Valparaiso, Ind.

When talking about the restaurant, it is difficult not to focus first on its bold architecture, mainly the eleven statues of individual construction workers perched upon a steel beam eating their lunches.

These guys compose a “key element” of the restaurant, according to general manager Matthew Westergren. They anchor the eatery, whose decor, both inside and out, is reminiscent of different Industrial Era factories and supports its overarching theme of honoring the working man for his role in



“Really, there isn’t anybody in America who doesn’t have an individual tie to the industrial base. We want to celebrate that.”

increasing the economic and cultural vitality of America.

Part of that long-ago era included the daily use of fresh food, grown in gardens and prepared from scratch, “put up” for the winter and lovingly packed into lunch pails, providing an eagerly anticipated break in an otherwise long day of labor.

It follows that from-scratch food, made fresh and on-site, anchors Industrial Revolution’s food preparation philosophy and contributes greatly to the restaurant’s own economic vitality.

### Disneyland for Diners

Industrial Revolution’s owner, Mike Leeson, asserts that the average working person built this nation and therefore deserves a casual, comfortable eatery with excellent service and food – and no snobbery. Everyman is a part of the Industrial Era’s legacy, and of this establishment as well.

He believes well-prepared food that uses the freshest available ingredi-

ents and is prepared from scratch and on-site by a chef should not be obtainable solely in the realm of white tablecloth dining, which typically eliminates a large demographic – that of the average Joe – by being pricey and intimidating and by requiring a fancy dress code.

To this end, Westergren explains that the restaurant’s mission is “to take upscale food to the casual diner.” This goal is accomplished not only via homemade food with gourmet touches, but by providing person-

alized service in a casual atmosphere.

Westergren talks about bringing the "Disney philosophy" to food service. The restaurant is focused on having mass appeal, great value, home goodness, a welcoming atmosphere and exceptional service – similar to Walt Disney's vision for an Everyman's retreat.

#### Comfort with a Twist

The menu at Industrial Revolution presents common food with pronounceable names and down-home roots, or, as they say at I.R., "traditional American meals with a gourmet twist." One such dish is the pot roast, braised in root vegetables – once the mainstay of the working man's diet, but which now give the meal a fine dining feel. Similarly, the meatloaf includes such old-fashioned touches as bell peppers and tomatoes, but with the contemporary kick of Dijon mustard.

Westergren explains that the menu aims "to put a unique spin on things that are certainly out there," rather than re-invent the culinary wheel. The importance here is traditional foods created with an added flair that classifies them simultaneously as comfort foods and gourmet-quality dishes.

With a diversified menu of pizza, pasta, salads, sandwiches, burgers, fish, steak and more, along with a full bar, Industrial Revolution is ready to satisfy any sized appetite

or craving. From finger foods to freshly baked desserts, the menu was designed to deliver everything from scratch, just as they did in the pre-industrial food system era.

#### Flagship Sets Sail

The Valparaiso restaurant is not close to a year old, but it is called a flagship store because of hopes for several sites to follow. But Industrial Revolution is not and will not be a "chain" restaurant, says Westergren. Each location will be built in its "own unique footprint" with respect paid to the unique qualities of each home city.

More than the architecture will anchor these eateries. Much like the statues, which will be a signature item in every location, the building blocks of the Industrial Revolution menu will remain in place. What the menu won't be is cookie cutter: It will change quarterly and take full advantage of the seasonal harvest, which may vary across locations at different times of the year. There will never be prepared, processed or frozen foods used, says Westergren, who also emphasizes that a culinary professional will be involved in every restaurant.

That professional will make the dishes from scratch and to order. So while a diner can go into any Industrial Revolution and recognize the key architectural elements and the menu items, each

location will have its own spin, within the established, consistent parameters of the brand. It won't be an identical experience, but it will be one that can be labeled "the Industrial Revolution experience."

Using a trusted food distributor, who can provide the best ingredients no matter where the location, will be an important factor in making this business plan work. Stanz Food Service ably provides this necessary ingredient for the flagship restaurant and is capable of providing local service and dedication to any Industrial Revolution location through Tailor Made Distribution, a partnership of independent distributors.

All in all, it seems Industrial Revolution Eatery and Grille is poised to start a new revolution in food service.

*Tamara Scully is a northwestern New Jersey-based freelance writer, specializing in agriculture, sustainable farming and the food industry. Visit Ms. Scully at [www.tamara-jeanscully.com](http://www.tamara-jeanscully.com).*

Find it...

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### Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

1084 Linwood Avenue

Designer: Mike Leeson

Contractor: Bryan Sewin

The Valpo Chamber and City of Valparaiso recognized 10 local businesses for their commitment and investment in Valparaiso by awarding them with a 43rd Annual Community Improvement Award. A luncheon sponsored by Porter Health System was held July 7 to honor the recipients and their projects which improve our city.

These projects join the more than 200 properties that have been recognized since the awards program began. Community Improvement Awards are based on the visual impact of exterior appearance and are judged on the following criteria:

- Enhances the attractiveness of Valparaiso

- Compatible with the area and environment
- Shows creativity/innovation in both design and use of materials
- Enhances the quality of life and promotes pride in Valparaiso
- Makes a commitment to Valparaiso's future