

Jerry Davich: Let's talk frankly about hot dog joints

JERRY DAVICH July 18, 2013 11:22PM

Frankly, I almost drove past the hard-to-see hot dog cart called “Crazy Dogs from New York.”

When I heard there was a new hot dog joint in the region, I had to sample it for myself. For me, the “dog days of summer” are not about canines, laziness or the heat index, but about trying new hot dog joints across the region. I’ve been relishing the idea, though I’ve been in a pickle until this new place opened two weeks ago. (Sorry, I couldn’t resist those puns.)

Seriously, I have a soft spot for these places after making literally thousands of hot dogs over the course of 22 years for my former family food business. Back then, we used David Berg franks, not the more popular Vienna hot dog.

What caught my attention with this new place is that it uses Sabrett franks, New York’s No. 1, all-beef hot dog, renowned for their “snap” natural casing.

“After getting my wife hooked on Nathan’s hot dogs — the other New York hot dog which are available here — she finally had a Sabrett two months ago on a trip to New York City,” explained Crazy Dogs owner Bob Schappert of Portage in between customers.

“She fell in love with them, so we decided why not let the people of Northwest Indiana enjoy the goodness, too,” added Schappert, while topping off my Sabrett dog with mustard, kraut and barbeque onions.

“I won’t eat any other hot dog now,” noted Schappert’s wife, Laura, a former fine dining server.

As cars whizzed past the couple’s traditional-style hot dog cart in the parking lot of Al’s Tires on U.S. 6 in South Haven, I peppered them with questions, specifically why they brought New York-style dogs to this region.

Schappert, a 61-year-old salty-looking guy with tattoos on his arm, explained that he’s originally from Long Island. He grew up on those franks. (Watch a video of his explanation at www.post-trib.com)

“Our Sabrett products are shipped from out east, where they are found on almost every street corner,” he said.

The Sabrett dog definitely cuts the mustard, and they’re different than the ones we normally eat in the Chicago area. The franks are cooked in beef broth, which also adds to their unique taste. If you’re a hot dog lover like me, you should give them a try.

“We are here Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.,” said Schappert, who can be reached at 487-4129.

Do you have a favorite hot dog stand in the region or beyond? Is it Ruben’s in Lake Station? Valpo Vienna’s in downtown Valparaiso? The Chuck Wheeler Hot Dog Stand in Gary and Westfield Southlake Mall in Hobart? Let me know.

On today’s Casual Fridays radio show, we’ll be serving up this subject and we welcome your recommendations, which I will print in a future column. Tune in between noon and 1 p.m. on WLPR, 89.1-FM, and call in at 769-9577. If you suggest a hot dog stand that we didn’t note yet, we’ll give you a free pair of tickets to the Portage 16 Imax theater.