

# CINCY'S

*Serving Downtown Greensboro Since 1987*

Cincy's Downtown • 115 E February One Place • (336)378-9774

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## Cincy's serves treat from the other Queen City



Brian Clarey  
Editor

Cincinnati is famous for more than being chronically misspelled.

Every so often in the food world, a dish becomes intimately linked with a city and their destinies are forever entwined. In Philadelphia they make cheesesteaks, and I'll bet there are mechanisms in place to ensure that the City of Brotherly Love will always have the best product. In Buffalo, NY, they make wings, the best in the world. In Santa Fe they turned ordinary bags of corn chips into Frito pies. Lexington and Memphis are barbecue towns; St. Louis pioneered fried ravioli and in Kansas City, I'm told, they serve up loose meat sandwiches that a trucker would fight you for.

The dish that made Cincinnati famous is chili - and the dish is not just your usual bowl of beans. All authentic Cincinnati chili is based on a recipe created in the 1920s by a Macedonian immigrant named Tom Athanas Kiradjieff, who took the traditional dish and fused it with Mediterranean spices like cinnamon and cloves before serving it with a host of options that included spaghetti.

The fame of Cincinnati chili spread, and it came here to Greensboro when Linda Schwoeppe, a native of the other Queen City, opened Cincy's fourteen years ago. She eventually had two locations, with one in Quaker Village. These days only the flagship restaurant, downtown on February One Plaza, survives. It's now owned by a triumvirate of women who worked for Ms. Schwoeppe back in the day: Bonnie Kays, Linda Manspile and Cindi Lang.

The place is a simple lunchroom with a checkered floor, tiny tables and aquamarine ladder-backed chairs. On the walls hang framed posters describing Cincinnati's other pleasures: the Cincinnati Ballet, the art museum, the John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge. The menu includes many noontime standards like sandwiches, salads and burgers but most of the regulars come here for chili, and nothing else will do.

A miniscule woman named Minnie Crowder has prepared the house recipe each morning for the last ten years, using cinnamon and cloves as well as cayenne and chili powder to create levels of heat. She adds bittersweet chocolate for depth of flavor and some other secret ingredients that the owners will not name. Red kidney beans are prepared separately and added afterwards as an option. Other available toppings are cheese and raw onion and every variation is served -the five-way comes over spaghetti with beans and onion on top, then smothered with finely shredded white and yellow cheeses. Minnie also makes a small amount of vegetarian chili every week, a recipe that utilizes lentils and bulgur wheat for body and texture.

"People ask us all the time if they're really eating veggie chili," Bonnie says. "There's no meat in there."

A few years back the women subjected their chili recipes to a professional nutritional analysis and both varieties earned high marks. The regular chili, made with 50 percent ground turkey, carries only 120 or so calories per six-ounce serving with just over two grams of saturated fats. The vegetarian version is completely devoid of cholesterol and has a calorie count of around 30 per six-ounce serving. Remember, these numbers do not incorporate the spaghetti, the beans or the cheese.

The vegetarian version, Bonnie says, is actually a few shades hotter than the original. "I like to mix them half and half," she says. "It makes it a little spicier." The original version retains the level of heat I call 'Greensboro spicy' - you realize it's there, but it's not going to hurt anyone.

They once sold their signature dish with increments of heat, but Bonnie says that it didn't go over too well.

"Everybody just kept ordering the original," she says.

And they still do - the women say that they consistently sell twice as much chili as everything else on the menu combined. At the moment Cincy's Downtown is open only on weekdays, and lunch is the only meal they serve. But with the changes that Greensboro's downtown area has been seeing, they are considering altering the formula that has served them so well.

The women look at each other when the subject of the downtown resurgence is brought up.

"We've thought about it," Bonnie says. "There's more people down here and with the new baseball stadium there'll be even more."

They are currently considering expanding their hours of operation to encompass the dinner shift and perhaps beyond. They've also thought about getting a cart and peddling their chili out on the street, maybe over a hot dog or in a small bowl with or without the spaghetti.

But like a baseball game without the diamond or a rock song without the bass line or the name of the city spelled with an extra 't', Cincinnati chili without the spaghetti just isn't quite right.

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