



Good food is a family tradition.

*by Bonnie Williamson
photos by Tony Cooper
and Monika Wertman*

Delicious, high quality food and a family-oriented atmosphere are the goals of the owners of Schula's Grill and Crab House in Hagerstown. And they meet those goals with every meal.

"Freshness and quality are extremely important to us. Our food is delivered fresh every day. We also strive for excellent customer service," says owner Fran Sciulla. Her daughter Danielle Bloom is the general manager.

"And we're not just seafood. We have great steaks, too. And we grind our own hamburger," says Bloom.

The family is originally from the New York City area where they have numerous connections with food markets, including the famous Fulton Fish Market. Crabs and other seafood also come from the Baltimore area.

Food has always been a large part of the Sciulla family's life and the restaurant was the dream of Fran's husband, Eric, who passed away last July. Bloom says her father had worked in



restaurants since he was 16 years old but never had one of his own. In the corporate world, he became vice president of Ahold USA, a company that operates nearly 775 supermarkets. He was also the director of seafood for Weiss supermarket.

"My dad was a food connoisseur," says Bloom. "He taught us everything we know about food. He even taught me how to filet a fish. He wanted people to look forward to their meals. He loved to cook when we had friends over. He wanted a place where people could have great food and didn't have to go on vacation to get it. We've become that. People come here as a stopping point when they travel."

Fran said making sure customers are comfortable is part what Schula's strives for.

"We want our customers to be comfortable no matter what. We welcome children and grandchildren. You can use a mallet on your crab right at the table," Fran says.

Bloom adds, "You don't have to dress up to have an awesome meal."

Schula's has a special Guppies Menu for children. For adults, the restaurant offers a Happy Hour from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Catering is also offered. The restaurant seats about 108 people. Large families and groups are welcome. Reservations are requested.

Fran says plans are in the works to

take over the suite next door for private parties. She says sales have grown from about 20 to 25 percent over the years. She adds that attention to details is very important.

"If an office calls in an order, we write each person's name on the box their food is in. Talking to customers and meeting their specific

fresh and warm Artisan bread. We are then served piping hot French onion soup. I have broiled scallops and shrimp in a garlic sauce. Scallops can sometimes be bland and not have much flavor, but this is not the case at Schulas. Yvonne brings us the 8-ounce crab cake just to sample one of the restaurant's

most popular dishes. I must admit, I am not a big fan of crab cakes. However, there are no fillers in these cakes. You can actually taste the crab. For the first time in my life, I like crab. My husband has flounder stuffed with Imperial Crab served with a special sauce. The sauce has a secret recipe. Yvonne says sometimes customers request it on other dishes like rice pilaf. You get two sides with your meal. Stephen has broccoli and steak fries. He describes the fries as "almost creamy inside." I have rice pilaf and cole slaw. Suffice it to say, Stephen and I literally look heavenward in delight as we eat our meal. We both say we felt we found a new place to have our meals for special occasions.



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needs is part of what we do," says Server Yvonne Nave, who has been with the restaurant right from the beginning when it started five years ago.

"Customers are treated like family, and servers are too," she says.

Customers can pick their own combination of foods, specifying how they want them cooked. My husband Stephen and I are served

Although we are quite full, Yvonne shows us the dessert tray, which contains several different types of cheesecakes and a homemade apple dumpling, among other items. The tray is brought to each table. The selections change each day.

Danielle approaches us and is pleased with our reactions.

Although, her father passed away last year. Danielle says she was well-

trained by him and believes things are going as he would have wanted.

"He set us up for success. I like to think that my father is looking down and smiling. He loved people to enjoy their food. I think he's proud of what we're doing here," she says.

Schula's is located at 11205 John F. Kennedy Drive. Hours are Sundays 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., Monday to Thursday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. For more information, call 301-714-2999 or visit the website at www.schulasgrillandcrab.com.

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