

# THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

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## Longtime Bellingham restaurant Pastazza will close at end of November

DAVE GALLAGHER - THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

BELLINGHAM - A husband-and-wife team with strong ties in local restaurants have decided to retire from the industry.

Lynn and Fred Berman have decided to close Pastazza, one of Barkley Village's original tenants.

The restaurant's last day will be Saturday, Nov. 27. For the next few weeks, the restaurant will be offering a Farewell Fest, which includes daily specials of favorites from past menus.



The couple have been in the industry for more than 25 years, having first opened Innisfree in Glacier 23 years ago, followed by Pastazza 14 years ago and Pizzazza and Book Fare in Fairhaven about four years ago. The Bermans sold Pizzazza and Book Fare a couple of years ago.

The Bermans were among the first in the current trend of using locally grown products for their menu, starting with their own farm when the couple opened Innisfree in 1987, and later buying products from other farms from the area.

"It's been a great journey," said Lynn Berman. "There are not many businesses where you really get to know families as they are enjoying themselves. We've seen graduations, marriage proposals, anniversaries and children growing up. It's something I'm going to miss."

Perhaps best known among the Berman restaurant ventures is Pastazza, which was the first business in Barkley Village after the Haggen store opened, Berman said. While it's tough being one of the first businesses in a new retail area, Berman said they were impressed with Jim Talbot's vision of creating an urban village.

"We felt it had some cutting-edge aspects that we wanted to be a part of," Berman said.

The most difficult part about closing was breaking the news to employees, some of whom they have employed for decades. The Bermans put the restaurant up for sale 18 months ago, but were unable to complete a sale. Berman noted they were close to completing a sale four times, but in this economic climate it's difficult to obtain financing to take over a restaurant.

Along with longtime employees, Berman said the relationship with the community is what has sustained the business. Pastazza predated residential developments on the hill nearby, so many customers came from the Lake Whatcom area as well as other parts of the county.

One of Berman's fondest memories with customers is holding fussy babies so young couples could enjoy dinner. She did that recently with a family she knew well, then was stopped by another couple who reminded her she had done the same thing with their child 13 years earlier.

"No matter what, it seems like babies always get fussy when the food arrives," Berman said with a laugh.

After closing the restaurant, Berman jokingly said she plans to "sleep for a month," but looks forward to traveling, as well as spending time with friends and enjoying Whatcom County.

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Read more: <http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2010/11/08/1711142/longtime-bellingham-restaurant.html#ixzz14oWnjHwI>