

# New Silo season begins with new look

Commitment to safety remains in place

BY JOSHUA MALONI

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Sitting on your couch at night, flipping through the channels, it's apparent which shows are incorporating COVID-19 into their storyline – and which programs are ignoring it completely.

The same could be said for restaurants.

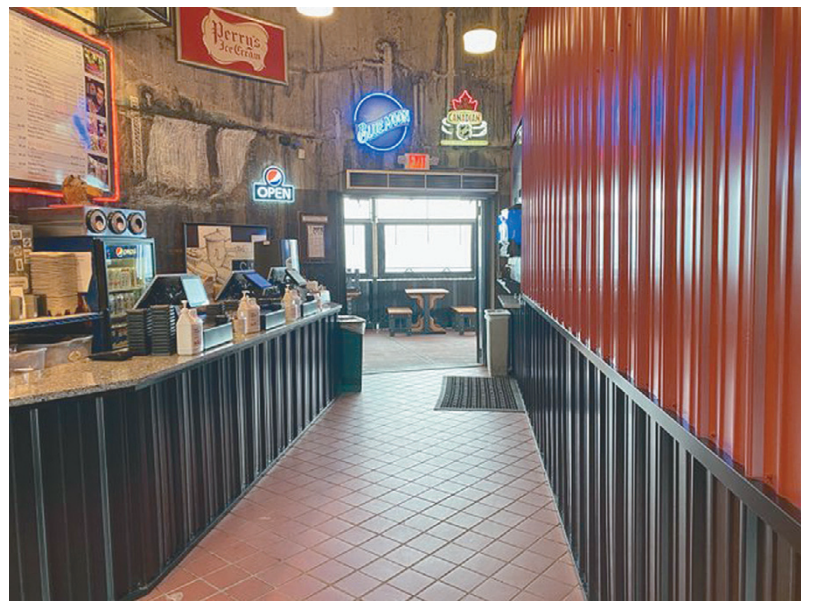
When the pandemic began last year, some eateries took bold steps to ensure customer safety. Others were less-concerned, trying to operate as if the coronavirus wasn't a thing.

Lewiston's The Silo Restaurant was one of the eateries that took the situation seriously – and took noticeable action to ensure safety and comfort.

Employees wore masks and gloves; Plexiglas barriers were placed at ordering stations; hand sanitizer was readily available; new customer-facing credit card machines were installed, and contactless pay was offered; social distance markers were placed on the ground; tables had double-sided signs that read "Safe. This table has been sanitized and is safe to sit at," and "Stop. This table has not been sanitized yet. Please choose a sanitized table or notify us to sanitize it for you"; and the takeout window was shuttered, as staffers hand-delivered meals.

Reflecting on the 2020 season – which began more than a month late due to state restrictions – General Manager Lexi Alfieri said, "It was important for different reasons. One, we needed to keep our customers just as safe as we were keeping our employees; and we made a promise to our employees before we opened the doors that their safety was our No. 1 priority. So everything we did, we made sure that it kept the customer and the employee safe; and we knew that we couldn't open our doors until we can guarantee everyone's safety."

Owner Alan Hastings noted customers "were definitely comfortable." He said, "You know, something was interesting. I had to get a COVID test. ... I was at the COVID testing center in Lockport, and I told the woman I own The Silo. And she's like, 'Oh my god! I just went there for the first time two days ago.' And I'm like, 'Oh, really. How did you hear about it?' She said, 'Well, the nurses here told me it was the safest



Pictured is the new-look kitchen/ordering area at The Silo Restaurant in Lewiston. (Image courtesy of Lexi Alfieri) Of course, The Silo is well-known for foodstuffs like "The Haystack," and picturesque views of the Niagara River.



place to eat in Niagara County.'

"That was through the Health Department, and those were employees recommending The Silo to other colleagues. That really, to me, said we're doing a pretty good job."

Hastings said such attention to detail will continue this summer, but the hope is for more of a return to "normalcy," as people are vaccinated and restaurant restrictions continue to be lifted.

"It's still our priority, but ... I don't think that we have to be quite as strict," he said. "We're still spreading out, and reduced tables in the restaurant, and putting most of them out on the grass. We've taken over the lawn-cutting again this year. So, yeah, I feel real good about what we did and what we're doing."

When the season officially (and on schedule) opens this Saturday, May 1, customers will see other steps The Silo team took to improve the dining experience.

Alfieri said the restaurant added a new granite countertop, stainless steel wall, point-of-sale system, plus Pepsi and ice machines. Fireproofing was bolstered, with a new hood and new cooking equipment. A new takeout counter was installed, along with a new condiment station. Dipping cabinets were added into the ice cream caboose.

"It looks like a new restaurant inside," Alfieri said. "I wouldn't say it was mainly due to COVID, but definitely inspired. Like our POS system, we now have a line-buster that we can take orders outside. So now, we don't need gathering at the door. We can practice social distancing in the line. We can take bigger groups, step them on the grass, and have them cash out there."

"We have new registers all around that have the customer-facing devices, so they don't need to hand us their credit cards."

"We have a new wall that separates the customers from the kitchen. So you know how you used to be

able to see into the kitchen? That is no longer. ...

"We have new tables on the back deck, but we've spaced them out – so every other table is out of order. We noticed a lot of people liked to stand on the back deck last year, so what we did was flip the benches. That way, there was no gathering around the tables, and it helps everyone stay apart."

"We did some major updates to make our employees' lives a lot easier and enhance the customer experience."

The menu remains the same, with the world-famous, as-seen-on-television "Haystack" sandwich, plus hot dogs, sausage, chicken, beef-on-weck and an assortment of healthier, veggie-based items.

"Something else that we started last year but we're really going to take it and run with it this year is featuring a game burger every week or every two weeks," Alfieri said. "So, we did an elk burger, an ostrich burger, a bison burger. And we found that to be really popular."

"And then in the ice cream caboose, Perry's rolled out a few new flavors. We're not even officially open yet, and they've been very popular. So, we do have a new few new flavors in the caboose."

"And the special board will definitely highlight some cool specials, including a game burger."

The Silo Restaurant, at 115 N. Water St., is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and until 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. For more information, call 754-9680 or visit <https://www.lewistonsilo.com>.

For those who still prefer to pick up their food and take it home to eat it, "The online ordering system is going to be up and running once we're open, so they can order right on the website," Alfieri said. "And that gets sent to the kitchen, and then they get a text that their order is ready."

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