

# Sgt. Peppers Hot Sauces capitalizes on the 'Etc.'

BY JOSHUA MALONI

The most important word in Sgt. Peppers Hot Sauces, Etc. isn't the one you think.

It's not the homage to the Fab Four, or even "Hot" or "Sauces."

"It's Sgt. Peppers Hot Sauces, Etc. on my sign. But I'm staring at, like, 15 types of peanut butter," owner Neil Garfinkel said. "I've got bacon jams, jams. I've got a whole bunch of products from Poland. I've got cheese. I've got barbecue rubs – a lot of barbecue rubs; we're big on that. Mustards. Peppers in the jars. Italian goods, like stuffed peppers with anchovies, and antipasto. Oils. We're just all over the place. A lot of nuts, too. We do sell a lot of nuts."

Since reopening at a new location in mid-2021, Sgt. Peppers has brought in an abundance of the "Etc."

"I sell as much of the other things," Garfinkel said. "Like cheese: I have customers that come weekly for cheese. But when people walk in and they don't know what's going to be in here, they're very surprised; and a lot of times they stay in here for half an hour. It's a tiny little store, but they pick up a little shopping basket and fill it up."



Yes, Sgt. Peppers offers some 300 sauces – of every flavor and potency imaginable – but this new spot has enabled Garfinkel and his wife, Town of Lewiston Clerk Donna, to be more creative with the menu offerings.

"We opened in June and business is extremely good," Garfinkel said. "I don't know why it's better than it used to be down the street. I think, maybe, people – since I've been open since 2014 – people are realizing, 'This guy's not going anywhere. He must have good product. Let's go see what he's got.'"

"The side location, looking at Frontier House out my front window, it's kind of hidden. But I put a little sandwich board out on the street, and people seem to find me."

He added, "When you have things that you can't get anywhere else, it's unique. People seek you out. So, we get a lot of people from out of town, too."

"But our locals are still coming. The ones that I started with



Sgt. Peppers owner Neil Garfinkel poses with some of the "Etc." items offered in his store.

back in 2014, they're still coming here."

Sgt. Peppers used to be located at the corner of Center and North Fourth streets. When a new plan for that corner was unveiled – and knowing a new building was being crafted next to the historic Frontier House – Garfinkel decided to move. He and his neighbors, Chris Budde of Brewed and Bottled Craft Beer Shop, and Barbara Gray of The Mad Hatter Tea House and Shawn's Gate Art Studio, decided to move into at-

torney Alfonso Marra Bax's property at 442-444 Center St.

All three merchants are now open, as well as a fourth first-floor tenant, Battle Flag Tavern.

"This space is more centralized," Garfinkel said.

He added, "We seem to be right in the middle of the busy section of Lewiston."

"And I've got Battle Flag Tavern, Brewed and Bottled, a big parking lot. People just come here to park, and then they notice we're here. All that adds up.

"Every time Brewed and Bottled and Battle Flag are busy, we're busy. And vice versa. We bring them business, too."

"I love this spot, and I'm gonna stay here for a long time."

Garfinkel further explained, "The whole building is unique. Battle Flag is custom cocktails that you're not going to get anywhere else. Brewed and Bottled is craft beer, and he's got an assortment – and things that you can't get anywhere in the area. And the same with my store. We're all almost the same. We work together – with different products. So, we're not competing with each other. And we're all friends; it's really nice."

"And when Frontier House opens, it's going to be even better, because we're looking right at them. And if it's a hotel or a bed and breakfast, whatever it's going to be, it's going to help also. I'm very excited."

Sgt. Peppers is normally open daily from 10:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. But for early spring, "it's probably going to be 1:30 till 7 during the week, and then Saturdays will be 10:30 until 6, and Sundays will be 12 to 5," Garfinkel said.

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/Sgt-PeppersHotSaucesEtc>.

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