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Rosie the Biscuit Maker: 83-year-old employee is a fixture at Forkey's Restaurant

By Andrew Crowley | acrowley@reporter-times.com Jul 12, 2018



Crystal Burdine (left) and Rosie Edwards have worked together for four years. The two carpool together and start work at 4 a.m. in order to get everything ready for breakfast when Forkey's Restaurant opens at 6 a.m. Photo by Andrew Crowley.

MARTINSVILLE

Her morning starts at 3:30 a.m., well before the dawn breaks. By 4 a.m., she's at the restaurant, preparing for the day ahead. The early hours are a necessity for her line of work: making biscuits at Forkey's Restaurant — a staple of Martinsville's eatery options.

Her name is Rosie Edwards, and she turned 83 years old on June 27. She has worked at Forkey's since it opened more than 30 years, and she shows no sign of stopping now.

"My doctor keeps saying, 'Rose, you've got to keep staying at work.' And I say, 'I will.' So when I retire, I'm not going to tell him," Edwards said.

Working at Forkey's keeps Edwards active. Her husband passed away 31 years ago, and she lives alone.

"That's why I enjoy going to Forkey's all the time," Edwards said. "I got some place to go and (be) welcomed."

The customers at Forkey's love Edwards and the feeling is mutual.

"I love the people. I got to know a lot of people in Martinsville," Edwards said. "I can walk down the street, and they say, 'Hi, Rose' and then they'll come in, 'There's the biscuit maker.' And I enjoy that, because I'm 83 years old now, and I live by myself and they are company 'cause I can walk in anytime and enjoy myself."

It takes her about 45 minutes to make four pans of biscuits.

"That's mixing, cutting them, baking them," Edwards said. "Because your convection oven cooks faster than your regular oven does."

She said the key to good biscuits is how they are mixed.

"You have to mix all that up and work it out," Edwards said. "If you don't get it right, it'll come out hard, it'll come out stiff. Your biscuits will be hard, too."

The biscuits and gravy at Forkey's are always popular, and waitress Jacelyn Kemp said that there's something special about the ones made by Edwards.

"I think she puts something secret in them because hers are the best, no matter what," Kemp said. "Everybody makes them the same, but it seems like you know whenever Rosie made it. Biscuits and gravy are definitely our top sellers and everybody comes in for Rosie's biscuits."

Assisting Edwards with business of biscuit-making is Crystal Burdine, who also carools with Edwards. She's worked with Edwards for four years.

"She reminds me of my grandma a lot," Burdine said. "She tells you like it is. I know her daughter from the Legion, so we met through the Legion. That's how we know each other."

Kitchens can be intense spaces when the orders are piling on and the level of stress increases, but that doesn't really affect Edwards and Burdine.

"I think since we're such good friends and cooperate with one and other, we do just fine," Edwards said.

Along with biscuits, Burdine and Edwards are in charge of making other dishes.

"I make the pancake mix and the French toast mix and I help with the dinner, mashed potatoes and gravy, the vegetables," Edwards said. "And Crystal usually makes the main dish."

Typically the pair wraps up their shift around noon each day and Edwards typically works 20 to 30 hours a week. She's been there long enough that she can basically come and go as she pleases. But she works as hard as she can.

"Even though she's the oldest, she is the hardest working one here, and she is non-stop all day," Kemp said. "She can never leave here because she loves working here so much."

She has been at Forkey's since the beginning, and she's been making biscuits there for almost as long. She's as constant as the hours kept by the restaurant: six a.m. to 2 p.m.

Edwards was working at the American Legion when Forrest and Patricia Brummett approached her about helping them open the restaurant.

“They’re wonderful people. Forrest and Pat were wonderful to me,” Edwards said. “I was young then, I was in my 40s. And I worked very hard, and I was with them 30 years. They’ve always been good to me, and I’ve always just loved my job — always tickled to go up and go to work.”

At some point, her biscuit-making days at Forkey’s will come to an end, but Edwards isn’t stopping any time soon.

“I always said, ‘If go to heaven, I don’t want to make no more biscuits,’” Edwards said.

Forkey’s Restaurant is located at 539 E. Morgan St. in Martinsville. It’s open from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Sunday. For more information, call 765-342-2033.

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