

'Something for Everyone' - Food and festivities keep guests busy at East Fork

Written by BY PATTI SELLS, News-Telegram Feature Writer
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Get ready to scoot your boots and loosen your belts at one of the area's largest waterin' holes — East Fork Restaurant & Club.

Dinner and dancin' have long been a staple in the dance halls of Texas, and at East Fork, folks can pull up a chair and sit a spell while eating Tex-Mex favorites or Black Angus beef before moseying on out to the huge dance floor and sashay to the sounds of some great country music.

"We get some really good entertainment in here," said Shirlee Frazier, who along with her husband, Dennis, has owned the Yantis establishment for the past 16 years. "Our food is really good. And we have lunch and dinner specials every day of the week. "

Monday's feature is an enchilada dinner for just \$4.49, and customers can play pool for free. The special on Tuesday is 99 cent tacos or fajitas for \$6.95 with a pool tournament starting at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday is a big night for the restaurant, according to Dennis, with a burger and home fries special for a mere \$3.50, or \$1 off any steak.

"That burger is our big seller," he said. "It goes crazy out here on Wednesday nights."

Thursday is all-you-can-eat Mexican food for \$6.95, and Friday is all-you-can-eat fish for \$9.95.

Friday is also karaoke night.

"We have a lot to do out here," Shirlee emphasized. "There is always something going on."

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Saturdays feature the sweetheart special — steak for two, which includes a 24-ounce sirloin, baked potato and salad for \$14.95. And while they wait, sweethearts can dance to the tunes of Richard Stuart, Ryan Pierce, or local favorites such as Bare Foot Texans.

“We’re seeing a whole lot of action out here,” said Dennis.

East Fork Restaurant & Club also has 14 televisions throughout the building which are great for viewing Sunday sports at the Fraziers’ weekly tailgate party.

“From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. when the restaurant is closed, we have a Sunday tailgate party in the back,” Dennis explained. “People bring whatever they want to throw on the grill. I provide all the vegetables for free and pitch in some of the meat — buffalo, elk alligator, crawfish — we’ve had it all. Usually about a 100 people show up.”

“People come watch football, NASCAR. Sometimes they play washers or volleyball,” added Shirlee. “We have something for everyone.”

The large building located on State Highway 154 south near Lake Fork will accommodate 600 guests.

“One of the main things our customers enjoy about this place is that we don’t rush them,” Shirlee said. “We have plenty of room, and people don’t ever have to wait outside.”

The restaurant’s spacious dining room provides the perfect setting for large groups, and according to Dennis, it’s a good thing since they often reap the rewards of being near the premier trophy bass fishing lake in the state.

“East Fork gets people from all over the world,” said Dennis, who admitted that great fishing is

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what brought him and his wife to the area for retirement.

It was when their son, Danny, and his wife, Kathy, came down for a visit and fell in love with the area that Dennis bought the “huge building that had stood vacant for years” with plans to open a restaurant and club for his son and daughter-in-law to manage.

“People thought I was crazy to buy this big old building out in the middle of nowhere. But I just told them, ‘We’ll see.’” he recalled. “Here we are today, still running strong.”

In addition to the restaurant and club, a tobacco shop and lure shop are also successfully run out of the facility.

Dennis and Shirlee bought Lockhart Lures about five years ago from Chuck Lockhart upon his retirement.

“When the news that Chuck Lockhart was wanting to retire started around, we couldn’t let these lures retire with him,” said Dennis of the lures that have been custom manufactured by hand at Lake Fork for more than 20 years.

The Fraziers asked longtime friend Rick Scharninghausen of Wisconsin, who has been fishing Lake Fork for the past 11 years, if he would be interested in running the lure shop.

“When they made the offer for me to relocate and run the lure shop, I was at a place in my life where I had things squared away and could up and go,” Scharninghausen explained. “So I started building lures. I knew a lot about them ’cause I’ve been using them for years now, taking them back up North with me. But I had to learn how.”

Not only has he learned how to build lures, he has added his own unique twist to them by making a line of novelty jewelry called Man Bait that has become popular in the area. His newest design features blue and yellow silicone skirts in honor of the Sulphur Springs Wildcats

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state championship win.

“They’re a lot of fun, great conversation pieces” Scharninghausen said.

Running a successful business is definitely a group effort, according to Shirlee.

“It takes a lot of dedicated work from the entire staff,” agreed Danny and Kathy, who both manage, cook, clean and do a little of everything to see that the business runs smoothly.

“Another thing we stress is courtesy and good service,” Shirley said. “We want to make sure the customers are happy and will want to come back. It’s a lot of hard work, but we all enjoy it.”

East Fork Restaurant & Club is open seven days a week — Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Sunday from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m.