

# SUCCESS

**KEATING**  
OF CHICAGO, INC.®

## Stories



If you've ever wanted to visit a village in the heart of Bavaria you needn't fly across an ocean to do it. Frankenmuth, Mich., is a lot closer, and as soon as you set foot in this town of 5,000 you'll be transported to another world.

For more than 70 years, one family's mission has become the lifeblood of this community. Now, some three million visitors come to Frankenmuth each year to see the unique architecture and browse in more than 200 shops, many of which celebrate German culture and heritage. Anchoring it all, and the driving force behind the town's transformation to a major tourist destination, is the Bavarian Inn Restaurant & Lodge.

Owned and operated by the Zehnder family since 1927, the Bavarian Inn got its start when Zehnder's Restaurant founder William Zehnder's son "Tiny" purchased



*A major tourist destination for more than 70 years, the Bavarian Inn Restaurant & Lodge serves over 800,000 meals per year - their most popular item is the Inn's premium, home-cooked Frankenmuth® Chicken.*

### Frankenmuth Michigan

Fischer's Hotel, the restaurant across the street, and combined the two businesses. Originally a boarding house that opened in 1888, Fischer's Hotel was remodeled with Bavarian architecture in 1959 and renamed the Bavarian Inn.

Tiny Zehnder realized how much cultural and ethnic pride the remodel instilled in not only those

who worked at the restaurant, but many in the town of Frankenmuth as well. He became a tireless proponent of transforming the sleepy agricultural town into Michigan's "Little Bavaria," encouraging and helping other businesses to remodel or build Bavarian-style stores, too.

Today the Bavarian Inn has grown into a resort and conference complex that includes a 360-room hotel with five indoor pools, a restaurant with 12 dining rooms and seating

capacity for up to 1,300, and more than 20 shops. The family also owns and operates River Place Shops, a shopping mall with another 40 different boutiques.

For all that, the Bavarian Inn is still a "mom-and-pop" operation. But as the operation has expanded, so has involvement of family members. Though Tiny passed away in 2006, his wife Dorothy, at 90 years old, still runs the large kitchen and bakery on the premises, and oversees quality control since most of the menu items are based on her recipes. Son Bill is



*The Zehnder family of the Bavarian Inn - clockwise from left front: Judy Zehnder, President of Lodge and Gift Shops, Imelda Leix, Gen. Mgr., Tom Jaskiewicz of Stafford-Smith Co., Mark Brooks, Purchasing Mgr. (back row), Michael Zehnder, Keating Rep Jim Schulte, Eliza Ann Keating and Eliza Keating, President, Keating of Chicago.*

president of the restaurant, and his wife and daughter are co-managers. Dorothy's daughter Judy is president of the Lodge and Gift Shops, her son is general manager of River Place, and her husband is corporate secretary. In all, eight family members, including three grandchildren in the fourth generation, have management positions in the organization.

"I think the secret to our success is that of Frankenmuth and all the merchants here," says Judy Zehnder. "If we pay attention to all the little stuff, the big stuff takes care of itself."

*"Serving Those Who Serve The Very Best"®*





We still think of ourselves as a mom-and-pop operation. We have about 1,000 employees, but we strive together as a family. We constantly strive to provide a quality experience, and we set our own standards very high.”

Of Frankenmuth’s three million annual visitors, the Bavarian Inn feeds almost a third at some point during their visit. The restaurant serves about 600,000 meals each year, and the Lodge serves another 200,000 to hotel guests.

The menu reflects the Zehnder family’s German heritage, and many of the ethnic dishes are made from authentic recipes handed down through the generations.

Patrons can choose combination dinners that feature typical German dishes such as kasseler rippchen (smoked pork loin), sauerbraten (marinated roast beef), bratwurst (smoked sausage), jaeger schnitzel (breaded pork loin), rouladen (beef roll), or three types of sausage. Or they can opt for more traditional fare such as Chicken Cordon Bleu, broiled whitefish or a chicken and broccoli Alfredo.

But what really sets the Bavarian Inn apart—and what most people come to experience—is Frankenmuth® Chicken, a dish so special it’s nationally trademarked. The Inn starts with a 3.5-lb. hen. Racks of chickens are lowered into a custom-designed steam kettle where they’re boiled for up to an hour. The birds are quickly

cooled in a blast chiller, and the resulting stock is used for homemade soup, gravy and sauces. The cooled chickens are cut into 10 pieces, and the pieces are run through an egg wash and lightly breaded and seasoned. Just before serving, 15-lb. batches of breaded chicken are fried for about three-and-a-half minutes, giving the moist, par-boiled chicken a crispy coating. The chicken is usually served family style with sides of mashed potatoes and gravy, dressing, noodles and a



*Keating Instant Recovery® Fryers are the “workhorse” of the Bavarian Inn. Dorothy Zehnder shows Eliza Keating and Keating Rep Jim Schulte how to prepare the famous Frankenmuth® Chicken.*

vegetable. Family style meals also include homemade noodle soup, coleslaw and any of three house-made salads, freshly baked breads and homemade jam.

The Inn’s Frankenmuth® Chicken is so popular that it cooks more than 300 tons of chicken annually, accompanied by around 280 tons of mashed potatoes, 78,000 lbs. of noodles, more than 135,000 loaves of Stollen (fruit and nut bread), and 28,000 heads of cabbage.

Practically everything is made from scratch using Michigan-sourced ingredients whenever possible. Breads, pastries, pies, cakes and other baked goods are made daily in the Inn’s 6,000 sq. ft. bakery. Meats, including all the specialty meats and sausages, are cut and prepared in a 10,000 sq. ft. “metzgerei,” or butcher’s shop.

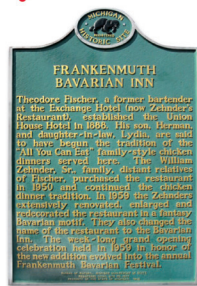
The restaurant’s main kitchen is about 20,000 sq. ft. and equipped mostly with high-volume institutional production equipment. The Lodge also has two kitchens, a banquet kitchen and another for its 100-seat restaurant. To keep up with demand for Frankenmuth chicken, all the kitchens have Keating fryers. The main kitchen has 12, with two devoted solely to cooking chicken livers. The others are usually in use all day long cooking batches of chicken so there’s usually two or three pans on hand for customer orders.

“During the energy crisis in the ’70s, my dad had to use electric, not gas equipment,” says Judy Zehnder. “He ran into the Keating folks at a trade show, and they sent some fryers up. We never sent them back.”

The Inn’s fryers have typically lasted between 20 and 25 years despite the non-stop use they get. “They’re really the workhorses of the kitchen,” Zehnder says.

“There’s no way we could keep up without the Keating fryers,” agrees Jason Wellnitz, executive chef. He just replaced a Keating griddle that had been in use for more than 20 years with a new Keating Miraclean® griddle. “Even though it’s slightly smaller,” Wellnitz says, “the Miraclean finish helps us cook faster, so we can produce just as much.”

For great German hospitality along with terrific, authentic ethnic cooking, plan a trip to Bavaria—the Bavarian Inn, that is.



*Bavarian Inn Historical Marker*



*“Serving Those Who Serve The Very Best”™*

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