

Galts pass Kavarna Coffeehouse to next generation

Streetwise

GREEN BAY - Order for Kayla Viste and Mike Hastreiter! Your coffeehouse is ready.

Linda and Alex Galt have sold Kavarna Coffeehouse to Viste and Hastreiter 20 years after Linda Galt first opened the venerable Broadway business at 112 S. Broadway, currently Jake's Pizza. It moved to its present location, 143 N. Broadway, in 2010.

"Mike and Kayla are the age I was when I started it. They're excited to try new things," Linda said. "I told them they can do anything they want. I'm happy to pass the buck to this young couple that's excited about it."

Viste and Hastreiter will take over ownership in early February. And they want you to know your favorite drink, sandwich or cookie will not be going anywhere. And the name will not change.

"A lot of people are nervous about this: Kavarna, at its core, is going to remain the same. Your favorite vegan or vegetarian dish isn't going to disappear. It's successful," Viste said. "We want to keep it what it is, make it better and stay involved in the community."

Viste once worked there and Hastreiter fondly remembers it as a hangout of his youth. They were both excited to find out

it was for sale in fall when they decided to buy a business.

"It was one of those situations where we were looking to make the leap into being small business owners and it was available and going to work for us," Hastreiter said. "We really appreciate what Linda and Alex have built so far. We want to keep it the same, add our own things to it and build off the strong foun-

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Kavarna Coffeehouse has been a staple on Broadway since 1999. Owners Linda and Alex Galt have decided to sell the business to Kayla Viste and Mike Hastreiter in early February, so they can focus on their hummus business.

JIM MATTHEWS/USA TODAY NETWORK-WISCONSIN



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and remains, an important gathering space on Broadway. Concerts large and small, neighborhood meetings, news conferences, readings and

to continue what you're doing," Alex Galt said. "It's nice to sell the business to people who understand what makes it special."

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dation they created.”

A cafe like Kavarna, located on Broadway now, might seem like a no-brainer. But when Linda opened 20 years ago, the all-vegetarian menu and focus on organic products put Kavarna well ahead of the curve in Green Bay, especially on Broadway.

“You were a hippie if you ate healthy food in Green Bay (at the time),” Linda said. “There were people who wouldn’t eat there because we didn’t have meat. They would always say their kids went to Kavarna, but they wouldn’t. It’s always been a hangout for everyone, but people couldn’t fathom going to a vegetarian coffeeshop.”

It also quickly became,

performances keep the cafe’s back half humming.

“We always thought of it as a community center,” Alex said. “We thought about how people could or would use the space as we designed it. We’ve made a lot of use of it over the years. Part of the story of this business has been trying things out.”

Both Alex and Linda said the thrill of experimenting with new ideas and uses at Kavarna had run its course in recent years. When they met with Viste and Hastreiter, they saw both an energy to try new things and a recognition of what makes Kavarna, well, Kavarna.

“You hope buyers want

Hastreiter said the pair have ideas they’re considering, including adding kombucha to the menu, but those will come in time.

“It’s really important to us that it stays the same. But we will be adding to that culture,” Viste said.

In the meantime, the Galt family has a few more weeks to enjoy the view from behind the Kavarna counter before passing the torch.

“It’s been an honor to watch Green Bay grow and change over the last 20 years,” Alex Galt said. “There really is no better vantage point to see a city grow than from one of its busiest coffeehouses. It’s been a privilege.”