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# Greasy spoon owner is king at Nancy's

■ *Run like a family kitchen, the diner is a success.*

**By Dorai Chenoweth**  
*Dispatch Restaurant Writer*

Let's hope Cindy King never hits the lottery.

Last week when the big pot hit \$45 million, King, owner of Clintonville's popular gathering spot, **Nancy's Restaurant**, said she planned to change the spot into a one-lane bowling alley should her numbers pop.

If there is a single eatery in Columbus with a large and vocal cheering section, it is this greasy spoon — a term lovingly applied here-in at 3133 N. High St.

At Nancy's, King is the queen. She runs the joint like her family kitchen. She knows every customer, and first names prevail. For the customers, eating at Nancy's is like eating

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in their own kitchens. Most get their own coffee. Most pick up their own napkins (paper, of course). And the strangest operating procedure comes when they pay the check.

Usually a check doesn't exist. Regulars know how much bacon, scrambled and home fries are. If they have a five spot and figure they owe three bucks, they drop the fiver into the open cash register and pick up two singles.

The next matter centers on why the place is called Nancy's.

King bought the place in 1971 from Nancy Kemmerling after an unhappy few years with Ohio Bell.

"I hated working with women," King said.

When King petitioned to change the frontal sign to anything linked to her own name, she said, "the preservationists" in Clintonville prevailed against her.

King cooks and presides over the

day's activities, debates and gossip. Most problems, however, are limited to politics and sports.

Walls above the stainless steel grease guards behind the grills and cooking pots serve as a picture gallery to famed past and current patrons. Centerpiece is a framed Jack Sensenbrenner, the former mayor. He's bracketed with such figures as Woody Hayes, Eldon Miller, Bob Conners, Scotty Graham, Mike Harden, Randy Ayers, John Cooper, Archie Griffin and Lawrence Funderburke.

King hires a cleaning firm to do picture-frame dusting, now one short of a full gallery. "Elvis fell behind the steam table wall," she said. He never recovered.

As for the King menu, one doesn't exist. As for what she does shove out, the highest tab in the place is \$4 — for her garbage omelet. Milk and soft drinks are half a buck; iced tea, lemonade, coffee and water are free.

As for the ambience everyone seems to appreciate, King said, "you're lucky if all the plates match."



**Dorai Chenoweth/For The Dispatch**

**Cindy King, owner of Nancy's Restaurant**