



The back room at Mugsy's no longer has the garage doors from its OTASCO days, but you can see their outline in the windows. The former mechanic shop is now used as seating overflow on busy nights, and can be reserved for parties and large gatherings.

"We had the Oklahoma Boer Goat Association meeting here just last week," said Darrell. "It was their state meeting. We set them up a real nice buffet."

An aroma of wood smoke and slow-cooking meat permeates the Grubhouse, sneaking in from the Smoke Shack, where the framework of Mugsy's incredible menu is forged. Pitmaster Josh Endicott is here keeping a careful eye on time and temperature.

Darrell and select members of his culinary team went to Unadilla Georgia, to learn how to cook meat from Myron Mixon, one of the country's most decorated and respected pitmasters.

"He's a four-time world champion smoker," said Darrell. "He wears the rings. We watched his shows on TV. We went to his school in March of 2017, five months before we opened the restaurant. We wanted to do it right. We ate real good for three days. He sent us home with all his secrets and recipes."

Yes, there is a photo, autographed by Myron with the blessing, "Keep on smokin'."

On the east side of the restaurant is an overflow dining area that Darrell calls the loafing shed.

"You know, that roof you stick off the side of the barn that makes the shade where the cows loaf? That's the loafing shed," Darrell said.

The walls of the shed are made from the horse stalls that came from the Oklahoma State Fair horse barn Darrell bought at their surplus sale. Inside the loafing shed, the tables and chairs are uniquely Mugsy's.

"Out here, we've got our Jack Daniels kegs for tables," said Darrell. "I had a vision. I needed wagon wheels. So I bought an old wagon that had four wheels and I put holes in the tops of the barrels and put those wheels on them and covered them with glass and now I've got tables. I knew exactly what I was going to do."

It seems like Darrell has always known exactly what he was going to do, even if he wasn't quite aware of what that might be.

Today, he wants to see Mugsy's Grubhouse expand to other cities.

Darrell's energy and spark permeate the atmosphere at the Grubhouse. Returning customers wait in anticipation of his expected, "Woo Hoo!"

It's his trademark - literally.

He said when the restaurant had first opened, he was asking people where they were from and said, "Woo Hoo!" after they answered.

"North Carolina... Woo Hoo! Kansas... Woo Hoo!"

Jennifer was listening and she told him this was something he needed

to keep doing - that it was part of Mugsy's charm.

Darrell has printed license plates that read "Woo Hoo!" and "Got Grub?"

Darrell is a marketing juggernaut. He gives these plates away by the hundreds and they are seen on the fronts of pickups and cars everywhere in the Cimarron Valley.

He prints his slogans on t-shirts and hoodies and sells them at the Grubhouse.

Darrell recently trademarked these phrases in anticipation of his plans to offer Mugsy's Grubhouse franchises.

He knows that good food is important, but it's not nearly as important as the people who come through his doors every day.

"When I was an auctioneer, I was a people person - 35 years in the business. It wasn't an auction business, it was a people business," he said. "Now I own a restaurant but I'm not in the food business, I'm in the people business."

"I'd put my servers and my steaks up against any restaurant in Tulsa or Oklahoma City," he said. "I ask people everyday, 'What brought you to Yale, Oklahoma?' and they say, 'Mugsy's good food and atmosphere.'"

If you're lucky enough to get the tour of Mugsy's Grubhouse, you'll realize this place is not about Darrell Mueggenborg. It's about the people who touched his life and made him the man he is today - a people person who's in the people business."