

HANGOUTS

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relatively new — at least compared to Casey Moore's — patrons guarantee it will still be happenin' and hoppin' in the decades to come.

"It's just a good place to come after work and hang out with friends," says Jeff Dodd of Chandler, keeping one eye on the sports ticker. "You can watch the game and just catch up on what's going on in (each) other's lives."

So why Jilly's and not one of the chain eateries across the freeway?

"I feel at home here," Dodd says. "It's not a see-and-be-seen kind of place; I can relax and just have a good time."

That homey atmosphere is one thing neighborhood hangouts and mom-and-pop joints will always have over the big, bad, chains, says Jeff Flancer, owner of Gilbert's Flancer's Cafe.

"Here, we greet you by name, and we know what you like and what you don't. And we try to treat our new customers just like regulars, because we want everyone to be regulars. You're not going to get that feeling at most chains.

"Bless McDonald's, because there are a lot of people who just aren't adventurous. And if they're happy with the more humdrum experience, so be it. But I think, in this day and age where life is so fast-paced, some people want something more original, where the food is more distinctive and the service a little friendlier — and I think that's the appeal of the 'neighborhood' hangout."

Back at Casey Moore's, Jasinski agrees with Flancer's assessment.

"People like me just want a place that feels like home, where the people are cool and friendly, and the food is good."

And where everyone knows your name?

"I tell you," he says, laughing. "it's seriously getting to that point!"

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"Word of mouth is so important to us," says Jeff Flancer, owner of Flancer's Cafe in Gilbert. "Neighborhood places don't have the big dollars, so we really rely on people telling their friends, 'Hey, let me tell you about this place.'"