

## Augie's

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KATHY MONTGOMERY

RESTAURANT CRITICS and foodies regularly mourn the passing of great restaurants. For Augie Perry, it's personal. So is his latest restaurant in Prescott. Perry put a lot of himself into Augie's, including a nod to the eateries he's been involved with over his long career.

Born into a restaurant family, Perry began his food-service career at age 13, as a carhop at an A&W drive-in. In Arizona, as chief operating officer of Big 4 Restaurants, he was involved with now-lost

Arizona landmarks such as Lunt Avenue Marble Club and Steamer's.

Not surprisingly, the menu at Augie's feels nostalgic, with an emphasis on comfort foods with a twist, such as calf liver with bacon and onions, baked three-onion soup, mac-'n'-three-cheese bake, and crabcake Louie.

The liver dish came from Henrici's, a landmark Chicago restaurant where Perry worked in the 1970s. Dishes from Arizona eateries include the Cobb &

Chopped Salad, inspired by the Garbage Salad at Lunt Avenue Marble Club; roasted sweet corn chowder, inspired by The American Grill's; and carrot cake, inspired by Oscar Taylor's.

Fittingly, Augie's is built on the bones of a Coco's Bakery in Frontier Village Center. But it's been remodeled beyond recognition. Painted in shades of taupe and burgundy, with lots of wood, pressed-tin ceiling tiles and recessed lighting, the effect is rather like a steakhouse on casual Friday.

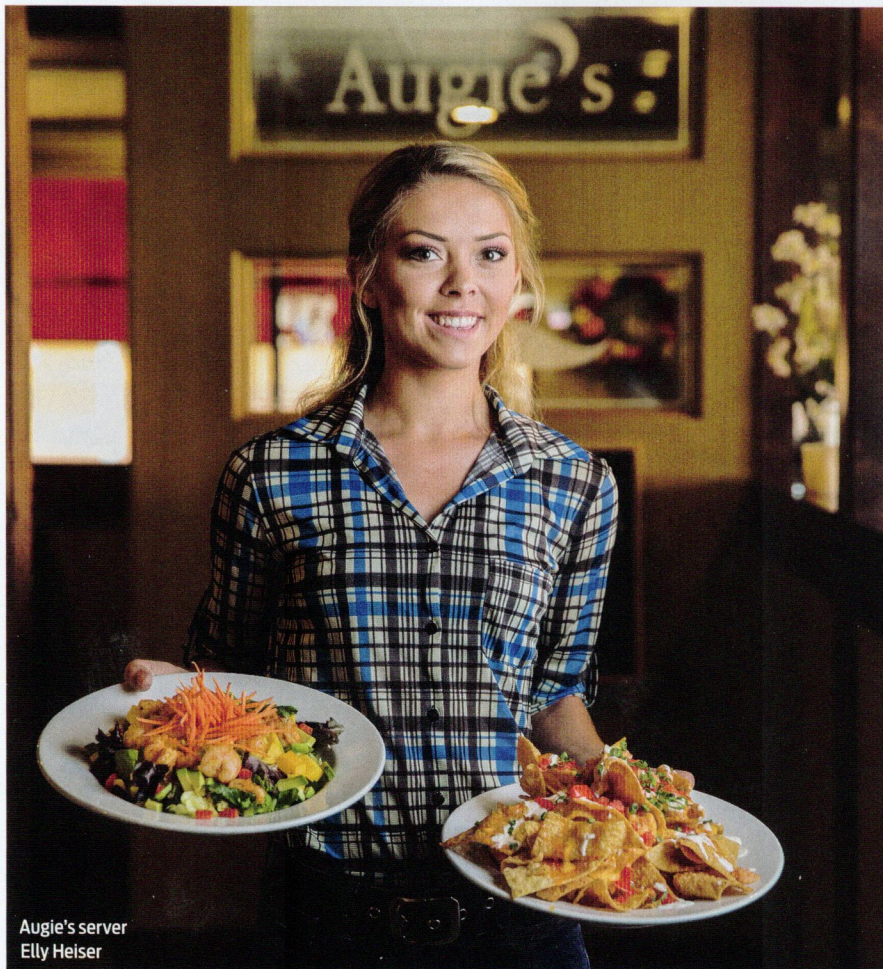
Perry transformed the lunch counter into a full-service bar. Booths and tables line broad picture windows where regulars find plaques inscribed with their names, a popular practice in the 1960s and '70s.

The food is seriously good, but the restaurant doesn't take itself seriously. For evidence, look no further than the 'Stache Wall of Fame, where photos of Mustache Club members (who enjoy monthly dinners with guest speakers) include more than a few women and children sporting fake handlebar mustaches in the style of the restaurant's logo. In a recent month, all mustachioed diners got half off on Mondays. Those wearing fake mustaches saved 25 percent.

Perry sports a walrus, according to the mustache guide in the lobby. His wife asked him to grow it early in their marriage, and he's worn it ever since. Over the years, patrons have given him everything from mustache corkscrews to glasses and mugs.

As Perry's Chicago restaurants did, Augie's offers special dinners that have included entertainment such as improv, cabarets and magic shows. Perry also does a lot of fundraising. An annual cigar dinner to benefit the local Boys & Girls Clubs chapter is usually held on Ash Wednesday.

Whether you've been in Arizona for 20 minutes or 20 years, you'll leave Augie's with a smile. But if you've been around long enough to remember the old haunts, you might just think you've died and gone to heaven.



Augie's server  
Elly Heiser

**PRESCOTT** Augie's, 1721 State Route 69, 928-777-0330, [www.augiesprescott.com](http://www.augiesprescott.com)