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David's Catfish continues to grow

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David Ross' philosophy of "Being better tomorrow than you are today" translates into how the Waynesboro, Miss, native has built David's Catfish House into one of the most successful restaurant businesses in south Alabama.

"It's a continuous struggle," Ross said. "You cannot get complacent. You must work everyday to improve."

And with that philosophy David Catfish House franchises have opened in Malbus, Atmore, Brewton, Milton, Andalusia and several more are in the planning stages.

Ross said that his daughter, Brooke, and son, Benson, will soon take over the Greenville restaurant once construction is complete.

The oldest daughter, Karen, is taking over more and more duties at the Monroeville location.

High interest rates forced the former contractor to abandon the building business and enter the restaurant business twenty-four years ago.

"Building just stopped in Waynesboro," Ross said. "I had to do something to make a living. I knew people had to eat so I got in the restaurant business."

Ross and his wife, Sadie, opened their first restaurant in 1983 in Waynesboro and three years later they moved to Monroeville. They opened their catfish house in the building now housing the Mexican restaurant, which is adjacent to their present location on U.S. Highway 84.

Three years later they moved to their present location.

The family restaurant has gained a reputation for its Southern menu with reasonable prices throughout the region.

Besides Monroe County, Ross said, his regular customer base includes, Clarke, Wilcox, Conecuh and Escambia counties.

"On Saturdays, we even have some of our customers to fly up here in their planes from Pensacola and Mobile to eat catfish with us," he said. "A lot of our customers will ride their motorcycles to Monroeville to eat with us."

The catfish is farm raised in Yazoo City, Miss; the shrimp, oys-



David Ross, second from right, is shown with family members and long-time employees. From left, are Benson Ross, Karen Ross Hare, Betty Peoples, Margaret Watts, Heather Malone, Ross and Janet Flowers.

ters and stuffed crab are from Bon Secour. While most of it is fried, it is set apart from other fried foods at other restaurants by how light and not greasy it is.

Another favorite is the cole slaw, which is the recipe of his wife. Each day customers make special trips to the restaurant to buy cole slaw for take out.

Ross estimates that he uses between 1,200 and 1,500 pounds of cabbage each week.

Several publications have recognized the restaurant. It was

named by the Alabama Board of Tourism as "One of the Best 100 Places to Eat Before you Die," and was featured in Southern Living magazine.

Ross said the failure rate for restaurants is so high that you have to always go that extra mile.

"You have to be consistent, clean and offer good service," Ross said. "You must offer good food at a fair price. If you don't, then you'll be like the other 90 percent of the restaurants that fail."