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Local barbecue landmark celebrates 75 years — and patrons are revved up

By **Gracie Brogowski, contributor** and **Kevin Gorman, contributor**
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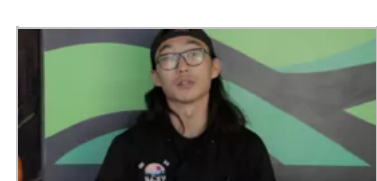
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The Bar-B-Q Ranch north of Harrisonburg on Route 11 has been in business since 1947. (Photo by Kevin Gorman)

Article by contributor **Gracie Brogowski** and video by contributor **Kevin Gorman**

The kitchen is filled with cooks chopping up pork for a pulled pork sandwich, breading a freshly cut chicken leg for some hot fried chicken or using the tongs to pull out strips of steak from a pan onto a bun for a homemade cheesesteak.

Since 1947, Bar-B-Q Ranch's kitchen has been busting as it serves some southern favorites to area residents and those traveling through. Three-quarters of a century later, this local institution on Route 11 just north of Harrisonburg is still running seven days a week.

The restaurant began as a take-out restaurant 15 years before Interstate 81 was built, as the [Bar-B-Q Ranch's website explains](#). It has changed ownership through the years and has expanded along the way. For nearly four decades, Faye Bland has owned the restaurant and has expanded its potential. She bought it in 1984 after seeing the building being advertised.

"I saw it in the paper for rent and then I decided I wanted to go to the restaurant and be in the restaurant business," Bland said in an interview. "I love to cook, and I love people."

Different owners added more to the building including a curb-side pickup and sit-down seating in 1966. They even offer a catering option for events like weddings and parties. Many Harrisonburg residents, including Bland, describe it as a local landmark.

Brian Arbogast from Arbogast Farms in Lacey Spring has been going to Bar-B-Q Ranch for the past 35 years. His wife, Lauren Abogast, has been going there since the two got married in 2005.

"It's kind of like a staple north of Harrisonburg," Brian Arbogast said. "People ask where you live and you can say 'well, you know where Bar-B-Q Ranch is? We're north of Bar-B-Q Ranch.'"

The restaurant's menu has stayed consistent throughout the years with a few additions as well. The food is all started from scratch as well.

"If it's not broke, don't fix it," Lauren Arbogast said. "So if she has found a menu that really works for her and people love it, I think 'good for her that she's kind of figured that out and has kept it consistent.'"

Bland said the restaurant has regular customers who come as often as weekly. And some families pass on their love and loyalty for the barbecue joint through generations.

"We have people come here every night to eat. We have a couple that comes and brings their son seven times a week. And then we have other people come back every day for lunch or the weekend for chicken," Bland said.



For her, the thing that sticks out the most is their occasional Cruise-in which features dozens of antique cars on the Bar-B-Q Ranch property. The restaurant has hosted more than 50 car shows over the years, including the most recent one on Friday.

"When I was little, like 10 years old or so, we would go to the Cruise-ins," Brian Arbogast said. "I do remember many, many Cruise-ins and every year they would give away a little plaque — a little gold plaque — for each car. And you would see those plaques on cars — how they attended the Bar-B-Q Ranch Cruise-In,"

The restaurant business can be particularly tough. [One national analysis showed](#) that a majority of restaurants failed in their first year of business and, of the ones that survived their first year, only 30% of them made it beyond five years. So, it's a source of pride that one can celebrate its 75th anniversary.

"I think that all cities and towns should have some landmark areas that are preserved, you know, whether it's a restaurant or a park or a building," Lauren Arbogast said. "So yeah, [I'm] kind of proud of Bar-B-Q Ranch for being that."

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