

The 5th of May....

And I didn't go to a Mexican Restaurant. Other plans (thanks C and L) prevented my normal trek to a Mexican Restaurant today. I had Greek Food. No flaming Goat Cheese, but it was very good. Not that I would have wanted to go to a Mexican place without at least one of my daughters, but in a way I missed the trek.

When plans were made, I didn't even think that the 5th of May was in the near future. I'm not sure that would have changed anything. I really want to try the flaming Goat Cheese.

Oh the memories of dining out on Cinco de Mayo. I don't think we missed many. If we could not afford to go out, most of the time we celebrated at home. Why such a big deal about a Mexican-American Holiday? ([not really celebrated much in Mexico](#)) The only reason we had was it was another excuse for eating Mexican food. Not that this family ever needed an excuse. My dear wife's favorite kind of food was Mexican (*other than chocolate), and we went to Mexican restaurants often. And it did help that the girls never really would mind another meal of Tacos.

So today I had Greek food. I was able to share the company of two very good friends. Nice evening, even without the Flaming Goat Cheese. Other than dinner with my daughters, I could not think of a better way to spend the early evening.

Ah, how things change.

I'm still wondering why we never went to Oriental Restaurants to celebrate Chinese New Years. Could it be that somewhere near the time of that date, we were almost sure to go to a Chinese restaurant? Yep, my birthday is near that day every year, and my favorite food is Chinese food (even better than Chocolate!!)

And why do I keep using the extended title of “Flaming Goat Cheese” for the dish Saganaki? Just because it is more fun to type and say. ☐

Crazy Prices!

We live a little over an hour outside of Toledo, Ohio, so it's the 'big city' we visit for extra shopping, better restaurants, and of course, the zoo. We've discovered a little cafe just north of the Ohio toll road called [Nick's Cafe](#), and they have GREAT food (including Greek selections – YUM!!) that comes in HUGE portions at very reasonable prices. Just thought I'd give them a plug since the place is never hopping when we're in there and I would HATE to see them go out of business... Anyway, next to Nick's (well, there is an abandoned honky-tonk bar between them called Bootleggers) is an old Frank's Nursery and Crafts building that recently opened up as something called Crazy Prices. The first time we noticed it, we were too tired to check it out, but last week we had enough energy left to go in, and it's awesome! They have a variety of wares, from groceries and household items to furniture and clothing, all at discounted prices. Like any store like this, some things you have to be careful about since there might not be much of a discount, but when we went, they had a special sale – 50% off ALL grocery items!! We ended up with about 4-64 oz. bottles of juice for the kids, lots of snacks and granola bars for school lunches, and a whole bunch of other stuff for around \$21! Plus, they give each kid a little squirt gun as a prize for “being good and letting mom and dad shop”, and they also give you a wooden token for each \$5 spent – the token is good for \$5 off your next purchase of \$10 or more! We will definitely be back! There is also a location in Bowling Green, and [if you go to](#)

[their website](#), they don't mention the Toledo location but it's there on South Reynolds, just north of the tollway. Better yet, we learned that this is a Christian organization! Their mission statement: *The Vision of Crazy Prices is to see a chain of discount retail stores providing income to an ever-growing list of organizations that are supporting young people, many of whom are hungry and hurting, emotionally, physically and spiritually.*

If you are in either the Bowling Green or Toledo Ohio areas and you like clearance shopping (my husband can't get enough – we spent over an hour here last weekend and he wants to go back this weekend – no complaints out of me, I like to clearance shop too AND this gets me yet another trip to the zoo!!), check out Crazy Prices!

EUREKA!

There's been a lot of buzz around here about a few new restaurants that are to be opening soon in our county. One is a replacement for a restaurant that closed due to the tough economic times. The old place had good food, but their prices were kind of high for the area, and their service was always very slow – perhaps two reasons that led to their demise? I don't know much about their replacement, except that it's to be called 'Union Street Grille' and will open in May sometime. Hmm, grille. Does that mean burgers and the like?

Next we will have a Sonic drive-in. For those of you who aren't familiar, Sonic is a fast food place, with burgers, french fries, chicken sandwiches and the like, but they also have outdoor booths where you can sit in your car and eat after your food is delivered to you. I try not to eat too

much fast food, but I do enjoy Sonic from time to time, and they have excellent slushies, ocean water, and especially flavored iced tea – YUM! And Sonic has a Happy Hour from 2-4 when their drinks are half-price, so I'll be there...

The other new restaurant in the area is a place called '4 Seasons' and it's about 20 minutes away. They have (among other things) Greek food – my favorite! Not a full spread, but enough to make me happy! Their gyros are great (awesome tzatziki sauce), and they even have homemade hollandaise sauce for eggs benedict. I think I've already rambled on in a few blog posts how important it is for good eggs benedict to have homemade hollandaise. My husband and I have searched many states for good hollandaise sauce, and many places will say their sauce is homemade even if it isn't. I guess to a lot of people, "homemade" means that they've mixed the powder into the water. But not to us – you can really taste the (ew) difference if there is powder involved. The other night, we ate at 4 Seasons, and I made a comment – now we just have to ask them when they're getting Saganaki (one of my favorite Greek dishes – it involves goat or sheep cheese, whiskey, fire, and yelling OPA! Good stuff). So my husband asked the waitress about it, and that's when we found out that they HAVE it! Of course – we find out when we're way too full to even consider trying it, and on the eve of one of the busiest weekends we've had in a long time. We will be up there to try it soon – no doubt! Before that lovely piece of news, we thought the nearest Saganaki was Toledo or South Bend, Indiana!

Anyway, 3 new restaurants opening up within miles of my house is a big deal for us – especially for one to have THREE of our favorite dishes! We eat out a lot, partly because the prices are reasonable in our area, partly because we're very busy people and I'm not home a lot to cook, and partly because it's really difficult to cook with 8 extra little feet in the kitchen to trip over! Maybe some day I'll have the time and

the patience to cook more often, but until then, new restaurants opening in our area to give us more variety is a cause for celebration! EUREKA!

Fun in South Bend Indiana

Of all the places to find fun, who would have thought that middle of nowhere, IN would be such a sight? Every summer, we meet my mom there about 4 times to swap the kids. She'll take them for a week, twice a summer, so because South Bend just happens to be about as close to halfway for each of us to drive, that is where we meet. We used to meet at a Wendy's just off the expressway, but our horizons have broadened, and my husband and I have been venturing off the beaten path to discover new things to see and do in the area. We found a good restaurant called Eleni's with amazing gyros and saganaki, two of our favorite dishes. We also found an authentic Greek restaurant called Elia's right down the street, but oddly enough, they are almost never open. They have more exotic Greek food like stuffed grape leaves, moussaka, and baklava, YUM! Their food is excellent, though we've only been able to eat there once because of their strange hours and seemingly constant family vacations. After eating and getting the kids back from my mom, we headed to the [Potawatomi Zoo](#). The zoo is a really cool size, perfect for our family of 3 small children and a now VERY pregnant woman. Not much walking to do at all, yet it has a good amount of animals, native and exotic, all types and sizes from lions, tigers, and bears, to monkeys, bison, alligators, parrots, and red pandas. I will have to mention that the Potawatomi Zoo did not seem very well-kept. A gardener in that place could have done wonders as there were many overgrown weeds, trees, and shrubbery, some even blocking what could have been better

views of the animals! One tree was so untrimmed it was blocking a drinking fountain! But as I said, it's a very cute little zoo, and they reciprocate with our home zoo, the Toledo Zoo, so our admission price was free and they don't charge for parking. I was surprised to see that the zoo wasn't very crowded seeing as how it was a Saturday in June under 90°... That zoo could really use a Jack Hanna to fix it up and get the publicity rolling – I see a lot of potential for it, but it does need some work.

After the zoo, we had kids begging for 'one more fun thing' (remember, they had been used to the fun of Grandma's for just short of a week!), my husband whips out Mr. GPS, and apparently he has a phone book feature on him, so from your car, you can find gas stations, restaurants, and most importantly, fun places and attractions to visit!

So KUDOS belong to Mr. GPS this time! Instead of getting us lost and chuckling at us electronically, he led us right to this strip mall that was like a step back in time, it was really strange. It looked like it was right out of 1983. I don't know how to explain it – we should have taken pictures. It would have been a great place to film a movie set in the early '80's, took me right back to my childhood. Anyway, in this strip mall was a place called Mega Play. From the outside, it looked closed down – they really need to get themselves a big bright 'open' sign. But once inside, it was a huge space where they had tons of video games, pinball machines, indoor minigolf, bouncy castles and tunnels for the kids, lots of ride-ons for toddlers, and right out of 1983 – a ball pit! The ball pit had a pyramid in the middle of it that the kids climb up with ropes and once they got the hang of it, they had a ball – cheesy pun intended. That pyramid gave me a flashback of playing on the same thing when I was little. I think they used to have them in KMarts, and my husband agreed. It was neat to see vintage video games and pinball machines also. The arcade ATARI games they had in one bouncy

castle area were free to play – they had Kangaroo, Pole Position, Asteroids, and some shooting game I hadn't heard of. I walked over to the pinball machine area because days earlier, we visited this cool pinball shop in a suburb of Toledo. The guy started it as a hobby, but it grew into a store, and he had all kinds of pinball machines, new and mostly vintage. He had titles on display like Demolition Man, Star Wars, The Shadow, and Hercules (an older game – it was HUGE!). He even had this Looney Tunes racing game (not pinball) that was really vintage and one-of-a-kind... it was cool to see. I wonder if the pinball guy outside of Toledo is familiar with Mega Play? But anyway, back to Mega Play... it was a huge, wide-open strip mall space that had tons of games, ride-ons, and bouncy castles packed into it – lots of fun there, but still spacey so you didn't feel closed in. It was the exact concept my husband and I had in mind for our own business of the same type we started a few years ago. We ended up having to sell the business because it was too labor intensive for the time and staff we had however. Too bad Mega Play is all the way in South Bend, or we could challenge our putt-putt-ing friends to the mini-golf course ☐

After Mega Play, it was time to find something to eat, and before we knew it, we were out of South Bend and into the country. The kids started getting crazier and crazier, and we vowed to stop at the very next restaurant we found before someone passed out or went insane – and some of us were close to either condition! So, we stopped at a restaurant called Dakota's in Elkhart IN, and I highly recommend it if you're ever out that way. They had the best cornbread, and their steak and cheese sandwich was simply AWESOME! They also have barbecue items, and they happened to have karaoke the night we went... it wasn't too intrusive though. They were in another room and we didn't even know it was karaoke at first until the audience began applauding. The DJ hosting the karaoke was singing a few songs also, and he was pretty good, so he actually sounded like a recording with a live quality. I

don't how often they have karaoke there, but their food is great, prices reasonable, nice atmosphere, and the staff is amazingly friendly. Keep in mind I say this coming from a super-friendly town myself, so we're used to the usual chit-chat when we go out to eat – but people in Elkhart were *exceptionally* friendly.

Overall, not a bad place to spend a day – fun and very inexpensive to boot. Too bad with gas prices the way they are we can't consider South Bend for a normal day trip for our family – there is plenty to do! Maybe we'll wander around some more the next time we meet Grandma there in July...

OPA!

Good news from our date night this week – we found a new restaurant in a neighboring town that has good gyros! Finally, no more trekking to Toledo or further just for gyros off the spit! And for you Greek food fans, stay tuned because we are currently trying to convince the owner to offer Saganaki, another one of our favorites in Greek cuisine! He said it's a difficult thing to carry since many waitresses won't serve it because of the fire involved. Yes, I said fire! For those of you who are unfamiliar, Saganaki is a greek dish made of sheep or goat cheese, and they bring it to your table, splash brandy on it, yell OPA! and light it on fire. A large flame erupts, the entire restaurant turns to stare at you, children cry, they extinguish it with lemon juice, and then the other restaurant patrons begin asking questions – what is that? Is it safe? What does it taste like? Can I have some? One time we ordered it from a restaurant and 3 more tables ordered it after seeing ours! It is DELICIOUS! Just for fun, here is a video of a waiter

serving it, though he begrudgingly *mumbles* opa while he's really supposed to be yelling it while smiling.

My 8-year-old daughter can eat a whole Saganaki appetizer herself. She is part Greek, of course, but the stuff is that good. It is my dream to get to Greece someday to try actual Greek food – if I ever had the babysitter, time, and money, it might just be enough (along with heavy sedatives or alcohol) to get me back on a plane...

Now onto the movie, I've been wanting to see the movie [Baby Mama](#) since I'm expecting and it looked like a cute comedy based on pregnancy – dumb title though I have to say. For some reason, our local theater didn't have it until now, so we finally got to see it. It actually wasn't quite as funny as it looked in the previews, but it did have a better plot and better acting than I was expecting – it did not disappoint. [Steve Martin](#) was hilarious as a very hippy-ish owner of a large company; I would consider his character the CEO of the Walmart of organic food. My favorite gag in the movie happened when [Amy Poehler](#) and [Tina Fey's](#) characters were fighting in the car and Amy Poehler's character couldn't get out of upper-class Tina Fey's "space car". So Tina Fey's character goes, "Quit touching the door handle while I'm trying to unlock it for you!" That is hilarious, I can't tell you how many times that's happened to us that the car door won't unlock while an impatient person is touching the handle. Whether you like comedies about pregnancy or just feel like watching one, I would recommend Baby Mama.