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Floating food: Couples serve up concessions from pontoon boat on Argentine Township lake

by Ron Krueger | The Flint Journal
Monday July 14, 2008, 5:14 PM



Ron Krueger | The Flint Journal

The Gocha family launched the Lake Dogs concession stand from a pontoon boat in June.

ARGENTINE TOWNSHIP, Michigan -- Most boaters pack cold beverages when they head to the water, but food often is an afterthought. Chris and Jeremy Gocha and their wives have a solution.

Their Lake Dogs floating concession stand is accommodating hungry boaters this summer on Lobbell Lake. The couples serve hot dogs, nachos, chips, candy, pop, bottled water and ice cream from Uncle Ray's Dairyland in Fenton.

They outfitted a 16-foot pontoon boat with a propane-fired warmer for Koegel Viennas and Flint-style coney sauce and cold storage for the frosty treats and beverages.

The 50-horse engine moves the food craft smartly around 545-acre Lobbell Lake's many inlets and lagoons.

Chris Gocha, 29, and brother Jeremy, 31, say the idea may have been planted when both worked at Hungry Howie's near the lake during their high school days.

"People used to say they wished there was some way to get a pizza delivered out on the lake," Jeremy Gocha said.

With the official blessing of the Genesee County Health Department, the Gochas launched their marine enterprise the third weekend in June.



Ron Krueger | The Flint Journal

Danyle Gocha (right) takes orders from Lia Tomczak of Flushing and Ryan Selley of Linden at the Lake Dogs floating concession stand on Lobbell Lake in Argentine Township.

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Occasional showers the first two weekends curtailed the hot dog express' time on the lake, but the balmy July Fourth weekend was a bonanza for the young entrepreneurs.

"We sold more than 600 hot dogs over the three days," Jeremy Gocha said. "The boats stacked up around us waiting to order. It was great."

On busy days, it is best to phone in orders, he added. The number -- (810) 938-7806 -- is prominently displayed on the boat.

The brothers and their wives each work a shift on a typical day. Chris Gocha's wife, Danyle, 26, and Jeremy's wife, Alisha, 28, both hairstylists, work together.

During good weather, the wives will take the boat out about noon Friday, yielding to their husbands when they get home from their jobs. They are back out for most of Saturday and Sunday.

"We learned it was more harmonious all around if Danyle and Alisha worked together instead of individually with us," Chris said. "They think we boss them too much."

With its tiki bar look, the USS Lake Dogs gets requests for adult beverages such as margaritas and beer. "We tell people they have to provide those things. We just do food," said Chris.

Because most boaters pack their own drinks, sales of soft drinks and water have been slow. Candy sales have been slow, too.

The couples have been so encouraged by the response to their unusual concession concept that they plan to expand next summer. They say they will outfit a second boat to serve busy Lake Fenton and may even build another to take to water-based events around the state.

"People get a kick out of seeing us, and we have a lot of fun doing it," Chris said. "This is our summer to learn. Next year, Lake Dogs should really take off."

With their day jobs and the new business occupying all their time, the couples have called on backup from family members. Danyle Gocha's mother, Carol Cooper, recently spent an entire day cleaning Danyle and Chris' home and doing their laundry.

"I told them I wasn't doing this every week," Cooper said. "But I'm glad for them. What they are doing is awesome."

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Posted by [lunapiercook](#) on 07/15/08 at 4:32PM

Great reporting Ron ... but where's the food review? I know you probably had some ... ;-)

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