

PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Restaurant manager recalls steakhouse’s start

NEWINGTON

By OLIVIA MARBLE
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Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse in Newington may have a tongue-twisting name, but it comes from its unique and inspiring origin story.

Founder Ruth Fertel mortgaged her home to buy a small steak house in New Orleans called Chris Steak House in 1965, according to Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse’s website.

Fertel was a 38-year-old single mom with two boys and was new to the industry, but she managed to teach herself how to run a successful restaurant.

She pioneered a technique of putting the steak on a 500-degree plate with a bit of butter to keep the steak hot until the last bite.

When a kitchen fire destroyed the original steakhouse in 1976, Fertel had to relocate her business, but could not legally use the same name for the new steakhouse. Fertel decided to add her own name to the sign, making it “Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse.”

Now, there are more than 150 Ruth’s Chris Steakhouses

in 21 countries around the world.

Steve Parker, the general manager of the Newington branch of Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse, recalled meeting Fertel when he first started working at the restaurant in January 1989, soon after the Newington branch opened in 1988.

“I remember my first week in the kitchen, she sat in the kitchen at the expo window, watching all the food come out, critiquing everything that went out... She was firm, but she was respectful, and she helped teach people,” Parker said.

Fertel died in 2002, but Parker said her legacy still lives on in the way they run their business.

“Her whole concept behind her restaurant was that everybody was welcome. Everybody was invited. And she just treated everybody like they were at her house,” Parker said. “So we still try to live by that, to operate off the premise that this is Ruth’s house.”

Parker said Fertel’s philosophy was to treat everyone in her restaurant like family, including the staff. Parker thinks that is why many staff members at the Newington Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse have



Photo via Open Table

Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse in Newington has been running since 1965, expanding to over 150 locations across 21 countries.

stayed for many years and why they were able to retain about 90% of their staff through the pandemic.

“The only way we were able to do that was by listening to our people and helping them when they needed it. Some people actually had to take more time off, and we were able to work with that. I think

just because we’re so flexible and we work with them, in return, they did the same for us,” Parker said.

The Newington branch of Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse is located at 2513 Berlin Turnpike. For more information or to make reservations, call 860-666-2202 or go to www.ruthschris.com.

BristolPress.com

NewBritainHerald.com

RUTH'S CHRIS STEAK HOUSE

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