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## **Merichka's Restaurant Honored with "Enjoy Illinois: Delicious Destination" Award**

*Illinois Office of Tourism celebrates restaurants that are authentically Illinois, attracting visitors and locals to state's diverse communities*

Crest Hill, Illinois, January 23, 2015 – The Illinois Office of Tourism (IOT) and Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) today announced Merichka's restaurant, located in Crest Hill, is a recipient of an "Enjoy Illinois: Delicious Destination" award, which honors local food establishments around the state that are beloved destinations for visitors and locals alike. Merichka's is among a select (only one in Will County to-date) group of Illinois establishments to receive the unique designation from the Illinois Office of Tourism. All award winners received a certificate from the state and a window cling to inform diners of the state designation.

"From family-owned restaurants with long and storied histories to the hottest new cuisines in the world, Illinois has emerged as a premier culinary destination for both domestic and international visitors," said Cory Jobe, Illinois State Travel Director. "The 'Enjoy Illinois: Delicious Destination' award honors those restaurants that are authentically Illinois, making a trip to the state unforgettable."



Owned and operated by the Zdralovich family since 1933, the restaurant continues to serve its customers on traditional red-and-white-checked tablecloths in a casual setting. The affordable menu offers tasty onion rings and fried mushrooms, jumbo hamburgers, veggie burgers, steaks, chops and surf-and turf, fried chicken, crabmeat-stuffed shrimp, Canadian walleye pike, Atlantic wild salmon and much more. Top off your meal with a bottle of domestic or imported beer, wine by the glass, a soft drink, coffee or tea – and save room for one of Merichka's tasty desserts.

Navarro and Crest Hill Mayor Ray Solimon presented the award to Merichka's owners: Joe Zdralovich, Sr., Joe Jr., Mary Kay George, and Ryan George during lunch. Mayor Solimon has many great memories of working at Merichka's starting out as a bus boy and holding many staff positions. His two daughters, both teachers, continue to work there on weekends. When asked about the signature Merichka's sign, the family responded "grandfather designed the sign as a boomerang so people would come back again and again." Solimon continued "Merichka's is Will County's oldest family run restaurant!"

Many travelers come to Illinois because of the state's flourishing restaurant scene. According to a 2013 D.K. Shifflet & Associates Study, nearly one third of leisure travelers to Illinois reported participating in a unique "culinary experience" as a key part of their vacation, proving culinary offerings are a key motivator for travel.

To be considered for an award, restaurants must be nominated by a Convention & Visitors Bureau, community member or Enjoy Illinois social media fan. The nominee must be a one-of-a-kind restaurant that is authentic to Illinois and an established part of its community. Only restaurants located in Illinois will be considered for the “Enjoy Illinois: Delicious Destination” award, which is chosen by Illinois Office of Tourism.

For more information about the state’s culinary offerings and “Enjoy Illinois: Delicious Destination” awards, visit [EnjoyIllinois.com](http://EnjoyIllinois.com) or [Facebook.com/EnjoyIllinois](https://Facebook.com/EnjoyIllinois).

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*The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.*

*The Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) generates economic impact to the communities and counties along the historic I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor through tourism marketing, promotion and development. [www.HeritageCorridorCVB.com](http://www.HeritageCorridorCVB.com)*