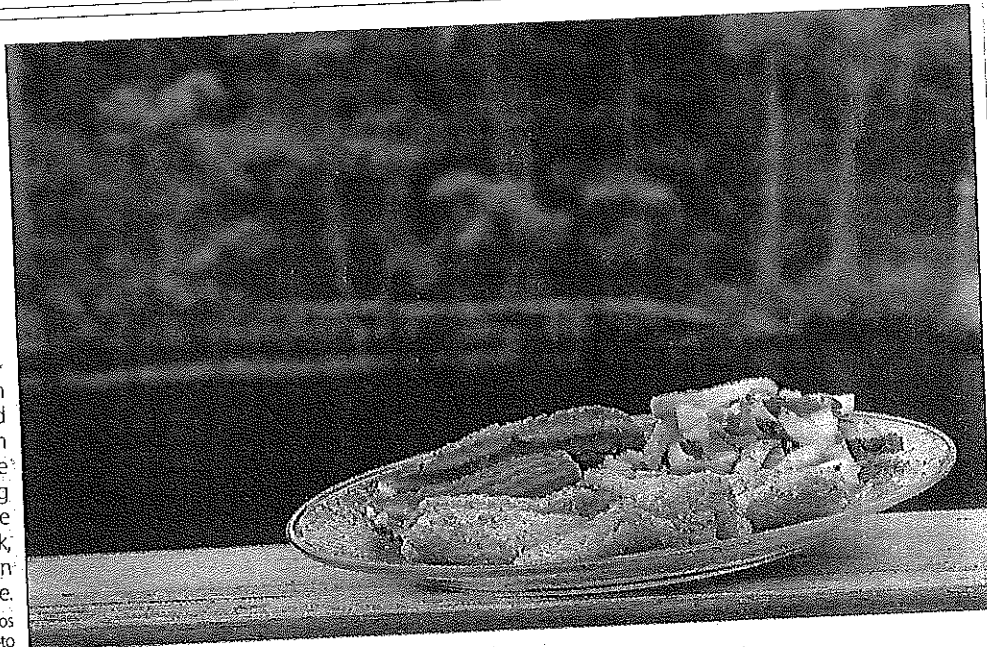


@the dinner plate

Catfish with fries and hush puppies are served at Big Pines Lodge in Karnack, right on Caddo Lake. Michael Cavazos @play Photo



East Texas legend

Find catfish, homemade hush puppies and more at Big Pines Lodge

By Christina Lane
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KARNACK — To East Texans, Big Pines Lodge isn't just a restaurant — it's a legendary landmark.

Located on Caddo Lake, the restaurant features a variety of food options but is best known for its catfish and homemade hush puppies, coleslaw and French fries.

"For a place that's in the middle of nowhere, it's staggering how many people come here," General Manager Harvey Scheuer said. "There's definitely a mystique about this place."

For many East Texans, Big Pines Lodge was a place their parents brought them, and now they bring their own children and grandchildren, Scheuer said.

Deeply rooted in tradition, Big Pines Lodge is a destination. Customers come from as far as Dallas, Houston, Shreveport and parts of

Arkansas.

"We're not on Interstate 20. You have to know about us," Scheuer said. "You have to be headed to Uncertain, a town of 94 people."

The lodge was originally built in the 1930s on Pine Island Road as a fish camp known as Hartzo's Camp. In the 1950s, it was sold to a family who enlarged the existing building to open a restaurant, renaming it Big Pines Lodge.

It went through several owners before being purchased in 2009 by Kevin Allen and Shell Sanford. Two weeks after the duo purchased it, the restaurant burned to the ground in a fire.

Allen and Sanford rebuilt it in the same location. Since then, cooks in the kitchen have been serving up 1,000 pounds of fish and 1,500 pounds of potatoes each week to dozens of customers, Scheuer said.

Recently, the restaurant has received even more business after joining with Capt. Ron Gibbs, who offers steamboat tours of Caddo Lake on the Graceful Ghost, which departs from Big Pines Lodge.

"We're a family business, and we've been here for generations,"

IF YOU GO

Big Pines Lodge

747 Pine Island Road, Karnack
(903) 679-3655

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday; lunch buffet is served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday through Friday

Menu Favorites: Catfish with homemade coleslaw, hush puppies and French fries

Alcohol: Beer and wine only

Children's menu: Yes

Dine in: Yes

Take out: Yes

Catering: Yes, but only inside the restaurant. No outside catering is offered.

Outdoor seating: Yes

Smoking: Permitted only on the outdoor patio

Established: Originally opened in the 1930s; renamed Big Pines Lodge in the 1950s.

Scheuer said. "We'll be here for generations to come."