



## Mad Maggie's serves up food and entertainment on three floors

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On a recent Saturday afternoon, the Bero family of Gilberts headed out to lunch after the girls' soccer game.

The foursome ended up in the recently opened Mad Maggie's in downtown Elgin and were very glad they did.

The family sat in the expansive main floor of what used to be JC Penney, a fact not lost on the parents, Kim Gilmore-Bero and Jeff Bero, both of whom were raised and spent most of their adult lives in Elgin before moving to Gilberts five years ago.

After exploring the upstairs with daughters Eve, 10 and 6-year-old Ainslee Gilmore-Bero, the parents saw nothing that resembles the department store except for one fixture.

"I looked and saw the elevator and immediately was like, there's my childhood memory," said Kim Gilmore-Bero.

As a child she admitted to pushing elevator buttons to alleviate boredom as her mother shopped in lingerie on the floor where they now enjoyed a meal.

"The elevator hasn't changed. Everything else looks nothing like it," she observed.

It's not easy to picture the bones of a department store in this comfortable but upscale restaurant, bar and music venue.

The main floor's tables and chairs are arranged on a parquet floor and pushed back when live bands appear on Thursday, Friday and Saturday night in order to create a large dance floor.

A bar extends across the south wall surrounded by taller bar tables and a cozy corner hideout encircled by a contemporary couch. Multiple wide screen televisions were running mostly sports on this Saturday afternoon, but they were muted as music is pumped throughout.

On the upper level another bar stretches across one wall, while the rest of the space is a collection of leather couches, deep chairs and coffee tables which wouldn't look out of place in the newly built condos across the street. Each configuration encourages conversation and comfort, while providing a view of the lower level stage.

In the basement there is a collection of games, pool tables, and more seating. A third bar there is nearly ready, according to waitress Caitlyn McCafferty of Elgin.

Set among both upscale condominiums and darkened storefronts, Mad Maggie's may seem a little out of place, but co-owner Sean Davis finds the spot perfect for his new establishment.

"Although the location might seem unusual, it's actually a good location," he said. "Elgin seems to be going through a transformation and our opinion is that in the next few years it's going to be a great place to be."

Mad Maggie's is Davis's first foray into the restaurant business after a lifetime working in the business.

"I started washing dishes when I was 16. I've cooked, waited on tables, bartended, everything," he said

He met his future business partner Ted Kuriata at the Cubby Bear in Chicago where he worked after moving from Massachusetts three years ago to set up house in his wife's neighborhood.

Tired of the sports bar scene, he and Kuriata decided to try their hands at the restaurant business, adding a live music stage as a

tribute to their musical interests.

Live music is presented on Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, turning the restaurant into a 21-and-older club after 9 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays while open to all ages on Thursdays.

"It's really a good venue for live music," Davis said. "It's not a place that we said 'OK, let's throw a band in the corner.' When we designed the place we designed it so we can do everything: music, food, everything."

"We're a huge fan of live music," Davis said. "We try to offer a variety."

Davis hopes to develop local bands as well as the best tribute bands in the area.

But the food is what Davis hopes will draw in the crowds on a day-by-day basis.

"We smoke our own food. We put it on special and have been sampling it and had a lot of positive return," he said. "I think we're going to build in the next couple of weeks and that's what we'll be known for."

Typical American fare, such as salads, burgers and pizza is on the menu.

"Beyond that, it's just a comfortable place to come and have a good time," said Davis.

The Bero family would testify to the success of Davis's vision, giving a thumbs-up to their lunch choices.

According to Kim, the french fries, a very thin version of the kid's favorite were a particular hit.

"They're different, thin and crunchy. A mixture between a French fry and a potato chip and the rice pudding is to die for," she said as the kids scooped up the last spoonfuls.

Over at the bar, friends Robert Knizner, Butch Stege, Richelle Pipski, all of Elgin, have already made it their neighborhood haunt.

"The people are great here," said Knizner. "They remember your name when you come in and know what you want."

Stege agrees.

"It's awesome here. We have a great time here and parties on weekends."

"We're very excited because Elgin needs a lot of new restaurants and bars," Pipski added. "They're adding all this housing and we need someplace for us to go."

Mad Maggie's is at 51 S. Grove Ave., Elgin, and opens daily at 11 a.m. For information, call (847) 531-5883 or visit [www.madmaggies.net](http://www.madmaggies.net)