

Friday Nights at Modern Fish Market

A Joseph Ave. Tradition

Modern? Well, not yet.

Fish Market? Without a doubt.

Friday night is fish fry night for many Monroe County-area residents, and the Modern Fish Market, 826 Joseph Ave., Rochester is in the fish fry major leagues.

"I would say we sell about 600 pounds of haddock on a Friday," says Jack Feldman, who has owned the Modern Fish Market 32 years.

He doesn't just own it. He's usually found right behind the big tub of fresh -- and he emphasizes that word, "fresh" -- fish in the front of the store. He's a somewhat incongruous sight in his sneakers and Izod sweater, but there's no question that he knows his fish.

"I'll sell any fish in the sea," he says. "We sell mostly salt-water fish, but some lake trout and others from fresh water. It depends on the catch, and everyone has a different season."

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FELDMAN ISN'T KIDDING about "any fish in the sea" part. He might have said any fish in any sea.

On a recent visit to the Modern Fish Market, the tub was filled mostly with mullets, porgies and flounder. Another big seller in recent years has become kingfish. Some Vietnamese families moved into the neighborhood and requested the big fish they were accustomed to in their homeland. Feldman starting stocking kingfish, and shad, another fish from the Orient preferred by the area's Chinese families.

Feldman has known the fish business for a long time. He was born in Poland, and arrived in the United States in 1949 from Germany. He went to work in another fish store on Joseph Ave. for \$20 a week.

Now the money's better, but he works at least as hard. On Fridays, he's at the store at 3 a.m., starting to cook those 600 pounds of haddock. Often it's 11 p.m. before he leaves. The customers are in and out much faster, but often they have to wait in line to place their orders. The length of the line every week is an indication that the fish is worth the wait.

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FELDMAN'S BUSINESS also necessitates meeting the daily trucks



JACK FELDMAN stands behind what might be called "a fine kettle of fish" at his Modern Fish Market, 826 Joseph Ave., Rochester.

that bring in fish from Boston, Rhode Island, and New York City's Fulton Fish Market.

He also does a wholesale business providing restaurants with fresh fish.

One bit of unfinished business is to renovate the storefront. The outside of the store doesn't do justice to the quality of the fish inside. So the Irondequoit resident and his wife,

Sally, are working with the city's Commercial Assistance Program to help finance the renovations. Then the store will be truly modern.

After 34 years of working with fish, has Feldman developed a distaste for the product?

"I could eat fish every day," he says, and that's a pretty good advertisement.