



Tour Zaharakos

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Zaharakos Ice Cream Parlor

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Columbus, 47201
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Schmaltz. Sounds like a good beverage, right? Look it up, though, and it's actually a noun meaning excessive sentimentality, particularly related to music. And I couldn't think of a better word to describe Zaharakos Ice Cream Parlor in downtown Columbus, Indiana.

THE SCOOP

Affectionately known as "The Greeks," three brothers—James, Lewis and Pete Zaharakos—left the family's general store and tailor shop in Sparta, Greece and opened their confectionary on October 20, 1900. (Yep, that's a 19 with two zeros behind it—as in the past century.)

For the next 100+ years, people bellied up to the counter through all the highs and lows to sip down a soda fountain drink, scoop up a sundae, or just soak in the tunes from the Welte self-playing pipe organ. From depressions, recessions, wars and assassinations to first flights, equal rights, peace talks and lunar landings, Zaharakos was an escape for many. That was until 2006, when the family was forced to close.

THE SAUCE

The following year, though, Columbus businessman Tony Moravec purchased the property and immediately got to work polishing the local gem. No small task, considering the goal wasn't to make the place look brand new. Rather, the challenge was to preserve the integrity, while making it look like a place that aged handsomely the past 100+ years. And Moravec and crew got it just right.

Walk through the front door and you walk right into 1900. Much of Zaharakos' original fixtures have been restored and replaced, including the maple and mahogany woodwork, marble countertops, brass chandeliers, tin ceiling tiles and soda fountains from the St. Louis World's Fair. And some items have been acquired, like a growing collection of soda fountain dispensers, a 40-foot back bar that Moravec found at Doc's Salvage, and the original Welte 1908 orchestrion that Moravec repurchased in California.

THE TOPPING

Let's be honest, though. All the charm wouldn't mean much if the food disappointed. No worries there. Zaharakos offers a nice variety of soups, salads, and sandwiches, with my personal favorites being The Gom Sandwich (like a Sloppy Joe) and Gom Cheese-Brr-Grr.

Of course, it's all just a palate prep for their specialties—the sodas and sundaes. A Green River fountain soda is a must, as is any flavored malt, milkshake and sundae with Zaharakos' homemade ice cream.

Check out these images of Zaharakos and then go take a taste for yourself...extra schmaltz.

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