



Published on *East Lansing Info* (<https://eastlansinginfo.org>)

Home > EL REWIND: Coral Gables; Historical Landmark Offers Greek Cuisine

---

## EL REWIND: Coral Gables; Historical Landmark Offers Greek Cuisine <sup>[1]</sup>

Sunday, May 24, 2015, 6:00 am

**By:**

Rosalind Arch



In a time when many quaint, family-owned restaurants have been replaced by chain restaurants, places like Coral Gables remain as a reminder of East Lansing's past, and for some, a familiar home away from home.

Built in the 1920's, Coral Gables was originally owned and operated as a dance hall and show bar with live entertainment. Gables in the 30's and 40's was host to popular music artists like Duke Ellington and Woody Herman. Although the building burned down in 1957, it was quickly rebuilt and renovated before the sounds of 60's rock 'n' roll echoed through the bar as students once again flocked to drink and dance.

Alex Vanis had no plans of changing Coral Gables when Van-Tes Incorporated bought the restaurant in 1968, but in the next 50 years, but change it did. Vanis recalls his own time spent at the popular bar while he was a student at Michigan State: "It was a dance hall at that time...rock and roll bands and Friday afternoon happy hour with Jimmy Mason. East Lansing didn't allow Alcohol til '71, so we all came here, to Coral Gables."

With insurance prices skyrocketing, live music became a thing of the past and the piano bar that had once occupied the cellar was closed down. The new owners expanded the menu and the restaurant, drawing in families while catering to the tastes of customers that had been coming in for years, and adding dishes such as liver and onions.

"We've added a lot more on to the menu," Stuart Vanis reflects, "We hired a baker and began offering homemade pies and ice creams." Popular dishes like the Moussaka and Pastitsio became staples at Coral Gables, which is now known for its Greek food. These changes began to develop the business from a lively college bar into a family-friendly restaurant. "We started doing things like roasting our own turkeys," says Stuart, "and added breakfast, along with the Sunday buffet, which changed things dramatically."

The popular Sunday Buffet features a variety of breakfast dishes. "We see far more strangers, young people and families than we normally do," says Stuart.

More recently, Coral Gables has expanded their bar thanks to John Cally. In 2008, the bartender successfully transformed its menu, atmosphere, and clientele, explaining, "My mission was to make this the most welcoming bar possible. I made a martini menu, added coffee drinks, margaritas, and started doing tricks. Now, people of all ages come in to sit at the bar."

The building's spacious rooms also offer useful space for banquets, which occupy a big part of their business. Various gatherings have enjoyed banquet services over the years, including events such as rehearsal dinners, reunions, funerals, memorials, office parties, conferences, and a variety of MSU events held by sports teams and fraternities.

Local family-run establishments like this enduring restaurant are at the heart of East Lansing; nowadays Coral Gables functions as a family restaurant and banquet hall, but its roots will never be forgotten by the Spartans who remember the good old days.

According to Stuart, the Gables family has "customers that have been coming since the day we opened...we rely on them to keep us going. People here know us and they know the management. They like to come here and see familiar faces."

Although the cuisine, entertainment, and even the building itself has changed over the last 50 years, and certainly over the past 95, one thing has remained the same: the loyal customers that keep coming back for more.

Coral Gables is located at 2838 E Grand River Ave in East Lansing.

**Related Categories:**

EL Rewind [2]

Food and Drink [3]

Local Businesses [4]

Always Pin [5]

**ELi is a member of INN and LION Publishers**



**Institute for  
Nonprofit News**



This news is brought to you by our financial supporters!

---

**Source URL:** <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/el-rewind-coral-gables-historical-landmark-offers-greek-cuisine>

**Links**

[1] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/el-rewind-coral-gables-historical-landmark-offers-greek-cuisine>

[2] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/elrewind>

[3] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/eat>

[4] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/localbusiness>

[5] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/tags/always-pin>