

Some Indy Restaurants Not Reopening Indoor Dining Monday

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By WISH-TV Staff Reports



Thousands of bar tenders and food servers have lost their jobs due to COVID-19. (stock image courtesy: Pixabay/shutterbug75)

INDIANAPOLIS - The biggest announcement from Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett this week was that restaurants can reopen indoor seating beginning Monday.

But just because they can, doesn't mean they will.

Our partners at WISH-TV report Shoefly Public House was one of several places where the operators are still wanting to see how things go for another two or three weeks before they open indoor seating.

Owner Craig Mariutto said until he's sure the coronavirus numbers have stabilized, he's worried about the risk to his employees more than the financial squeeze of the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the months of May and June are usually the busiest of times at Festiva, a Mexican restaurant at 1217 E. 16th St. But on Wednesday, it was just employees in the restaurant.

The chairs were locked up on the front porch, and, even though indoor seating could happen on Monday, owner George Munoz said it won't be.

"What good is money if you get sick?" Munoz said.

Munoz has talked with his employees. One-third of them still aren't comfortable coming back at all. The rest have decided, together, it's just too risky even at 50% capacity to reopen indoor seating as they see many people not adhering to social distancing guidelines.

"It's very hard to social-distance within our restaurant itself, so that's why we're playing it a little more cautious, really looking at the numbers over the next two weeks to see really where they are trending after the country reopens and Indianapolis," Munoz said. "It's a lot harder in the service business. People are eating. There's a lot of contact, even if you're wearing gloves, even if you're wearing face masks, washing your hands and sanitizing. There's just a lot of contact that could happen."

So, the picnic tables in the parking lot will stay for diners who want to grab their food and drinks and go there, even if Munoz says it's a big financial loss.

Across town, the signs reminding of social distancing and other health measures are up both indoors and outdoors at Shapiro's Delicatessen.. Lots of plexiglass lines the entire counter. Owner Brian Shapiro is ready for Monday morning.

"It's a little nerve-wracking," he said. "I'm excited but I don't know what we're going to encounter."

He estimates he's spent \$12,000 on all the extras, even as he's pulled 50% of the chairs, even as he knows it's impossible for all his customers to come back, thanks to the risk factors for some and the fright factors for others.

Still, while 50% is better than zero, it only helps slow the financial decline, it doesn't mean a profit is coming anytime soon.

"We are excited we're getting to reopen, but I can assure you that there's no restaurant model in America where you make money at 50%," Shapiro said.

He also is worried about big tourism events such as the Indianapolis 500. The race, moved to August from May, will bring people from all around the country and the world who could be contagious with the coronavirus.

Munoz said he's following the statistics like Mariutto.

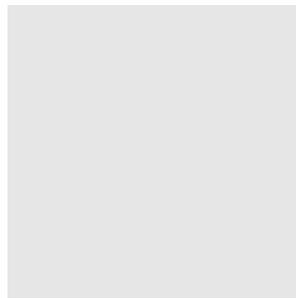
If things hold steady for the next few weeks, he'll be ready to open up seating indoors. Meanwhile, he's just holding on, thankful for all the current support.

"We will be fine unless a second wave happens, and that's the scary part," Munoz said.

Watch WISH-TV reporter Dan Klein's report by [clicking here \(https://www.wishtv.com/news/local-news/some-indianapolis-restaurants-not-reopening-indoor-dining-areas-monday/\)](https://www.wishtv.com/news/local-news/some-indianapolis-restaurants-not-reopening-indoor-dining-areas-monday/).

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