

Restaurant Owner Gave Key To Early Morning Coffee Drinkers

By C.F. Marley, Contributing Editor

Around Pawnee, Ill., there's a group of farmers and retired coal miners who like to get up early in the morning for coffee.

How early? Nathaniel "Muck" Sisk, Paul Mottar and friends are up and about by 4 a.m.

But, local restaurant owner Alit Kasa opens up at 6 a.m., and that's just not early enough for Sisk and his friends.

So about 5 years ago Kasa tossed a restaurant key to Sisk and told the early birds to help themselves. Now Sisk and Mottar arrive a little before 4 a.m. to put on the coffee and wait for their friends.

The cooks don't arrive for at least another hour.

As farmers and coal miners, Sisk and his friends always got up early to work and just never got out of the habit.

Kasa is an immigrant from Moldavia. He

has a definite accent to prove it, and he also has an appreciation of his customers. "But I just couldn't get up at 3:30 in the morning," he says. "Sometimes I don't even get to bed until 3 a.m."

"Those guys come in early and have their coffee. Then they can go back home and take it easy. I can't do that. So I just gave them the keys."

"People are friendly here," says Kasa. "It's no problem to trust them with the keys to my business."

Kasa appreciates the people around Pawnee. They've made him feel welcome and he, in turn, feels good about returning the favor.

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Restaurant owner Alit Kasa, left, turned his restaurant keys over to Nathaniel Sisk so he could make early morning coffee.

He's Built An Old-Style Round Barn

Brandon McClarnon could have taken the easier route and built a 16-sided barn, but despite the extra work he's glad he built a round barn. It's the first of three structures he is building to create a farmstead with a century-old look, using 21st century materials and technology.

"I'm going for a historical look that will create interest and maybe help me sell more cattle in the future," McClarnon says, explaining he has a herd of Gelbvieh cattle.

The Charlottesville, Ind., engineer credits his occupation and a CAD system for helping him create a better design.

"The way round barns were done 100 years ago, rafters were hooked together in a ring, and that's where they failed. So I built mine with ribs and purlins so they won't twist," he explains.

McClarnon precut all the parts over two months. "I cut my roof decking templates, soffits and circular stairway pieces using a CNC router," he says.

He used a paper CAD template as a pattern to cut the curves on a "half mile of lumber" on the horizontal boards to create a round shape.

"I started to cut using a band saw. It was slow, so I took a circular saw blade and bent out every other tooth about 1/16-in. in both directions," McClarnon says. "This allowed more play in the cut so I could cut on the curve. It created a little more sawdust, but was much faster than the band saw."

It took about 7 months to assemble the pieces into a barn in his free time with occasional help from his wife, father and friends.

He built it like a pole barn, starting with a center point and a 20-ft. board to mark where to place the laminated 2 by 6 posts for the 40-ft. diameter building. He used OSB board around the bottom and on the roof,

sided the walls with metal, and used asphalt dimensional shingles on the roof.

"Every shingle had to be cut with angles, like cutting a lampshade pattern," McClarnon says. "At the top, I was cutting every shingle into four pieces." It was painstaking work, but it gave the roof the wooden shake-look that he wanted.

Drawing the plans and shingling were the most challenging parts of the barn, which also includes a rectangular entry, or "doghouse" a common design on old barns in the region.

Round barns aren't an efficient use of space, McClarnon admits, and there are some awkward corners. But the space lets him do what he wanted - park his truck and an 18-ft. livestock trailer with room for a cattle birthing stall and stalls for horses and two antique tractors. A spiral staircase leads to the loft where his children like to play.

Instead of purchasing a weather vane, McClarnon made a small windmill with an old GM Delco alternator rewired for half the rpm's so it doesn't require a lot of wind. It's hooked up to a bank of batteries to provide power for lights and small appliances.

Altogether the round barn cost \$16,000, compared to about \$20,000 for a similar size rectangular barn. While he's pleased about the renewed interest in round barns, McClarnon doesn't plan to build barns for a living, though he will sell plans to others interested in building a round barn like his.

McClarnon has too much work on his own farm. His next project is to build a house. Then he'll build an old-style Gothic-roofed camp barn for his cattle.

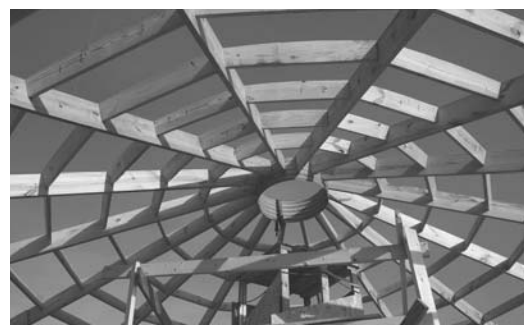
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Brandon McClarnon recently built this old-style round barn. It's the first of 3 structures he's building to create a farmstead with a century-old look, using 21st century materials and technology.



He built the structure like a pole barn, starting with a center point and a 20-ft. board to mark where to place the laminated 2 by 6 posts for the 40-ft. dia. building.



Instead of hooking rafters together in a ring, McClarnon built his barn with ribs and purlins to prevent twisting.

He used a paper CAD template as a pattern to cut the curves on the horizontal boards to create a round shape. Drawing the plans and shingling were the most challenging parts of the barn, which also includes a rectangular entry, or "doghouse" - a common design on old barns in the region.

