

# Lasting scoop of Tony haunts ice cream parlor

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BLOOMFIELD, N.J. - Holsten's ice cream parlor looks no different today than it has for decades.

But this neighborhood restaurant in northern New Jersey is, for the moment, the holy grail of TV locations: the place where Tony Soprano and his family were dining when they abruptly disappeared from our television screens in the series' final seconds.

The impact of that scene was immediate for Holsten's: Crowds trailed out the door and the phone wouldn't stop ringing. And while onion rings have been on the menu for decades, it took Tony's endorsement for them to supplant the restaurant's signature sweets.

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AP photo

"The Sopranos" fans have trekked to Holsten's ice cream parlor, the last place Tony Soprano and his family were seen.

But co-owner Ron Stark and his business partner, Chris Carley, now face a unique question: How can a small business manage the impact of instant celebrity without alienating longtime customers?

## Remember the Regulars

Teri Gatto has lived two blocks from Holsten's for nearly 30 years. Decades after bringing her kids in for burgers (and, yes, onion rings), she now brings her grandkids.

But once the "Sopranos" finale aired, she says, "I went to take the kids to go for ice cream and you couldn't get in. There were lines out the door." Other regulars had the same problem: "A few of them aren't happy to have to wait for a table," Stark says.

Still, the locals who supported the store long before the "Sopranos" notoriety say they weren't forgotten. The owners have made a point to greet them and chat no matter how busy the diner was.

### **Know the Price of Fame**

"Fame makes you have to raise your game. You can't coast on it," says Steve Abrams, the current owner of Magnolia bakery, the tiny cupcake shop made famous by "Sex and the City."

Selling commemorative T-shirts is fine, but it won't impress the locals. "We still have lines around the block, but we also deliver on the product," Abrams explains.

Abrams compares his experience to that of Tom's Restaurant, a Manhattan diner that had its exterior used on "Seinfeld" in establishing shots of the fictional greasy spoon Monk's.

Tom's has been subjected to some harsh reviews (amid good ones) on sites such as yelp.com and wcities.com. Some posters are irritated that the restaurant's interior bears no resemblance to the diner frequented by Jerry and his pals. Others lament the typical diner food, which they say doesn't justify the restaurant's fame.