

He lets you get grill now

Phil's Original BBQ

Address 838 College St.

Phone 416-532-8161

Lunch Mon. to Sat., noon-3 p.m.

Dinner Mon. to Thu., 5 p.m.-9 p.m.;
Fri. and Sat., 5 p.m.-10 p.m.

Capacity 50

Dinner for 2 w/tax & tip \$40

www.philsoriginalbbq.com



By RICK MCGINNIS
Metro Toronto

PROFILE THE FIRST thing you notice when you walk into Phil's is the smell of wood smoke, a spicy aroma that's gotten into everything over the decade-plus that Phil Nyman has been serving southern-style barbecue in his College Street eatery. It's a clean, neat space, jazz usually playing in the background, with as few distractions as possible from what goes on the plate; it's been like that since Phil opened, and it isn't likely to change.

Phil Nyman was a restaurant veteran when he took a trip south and fell in love with barbecue. He returned home and began experimenting before he realized that he needed to head back to the source again to turbo charge his inspiration, so he headed out — to Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri and

Illinois, sampling barbecue three times a day.

"I couldn't imagine why people wouldn't eat it," he says. Back home, he worked for two summers in his backyard perfecting his recipes, then started catering to test the waters. When he was certain that there were other barbecue fans in Toronto, he sold his house for the cash to open the restaurant once known as Dipamo's.

How Dipamo's became Phil's Original is a story he's loath to talk about, an expansion involving now-former partners who ended up with the name. "There's definitely a story there, but like many stories in this city it's locked up in lawyers' offices," Phil says. "Business names are like people names — once you register it, it's registered forever. I don't know who owns it now, and I don't want it bad enough to deal with those guys again."

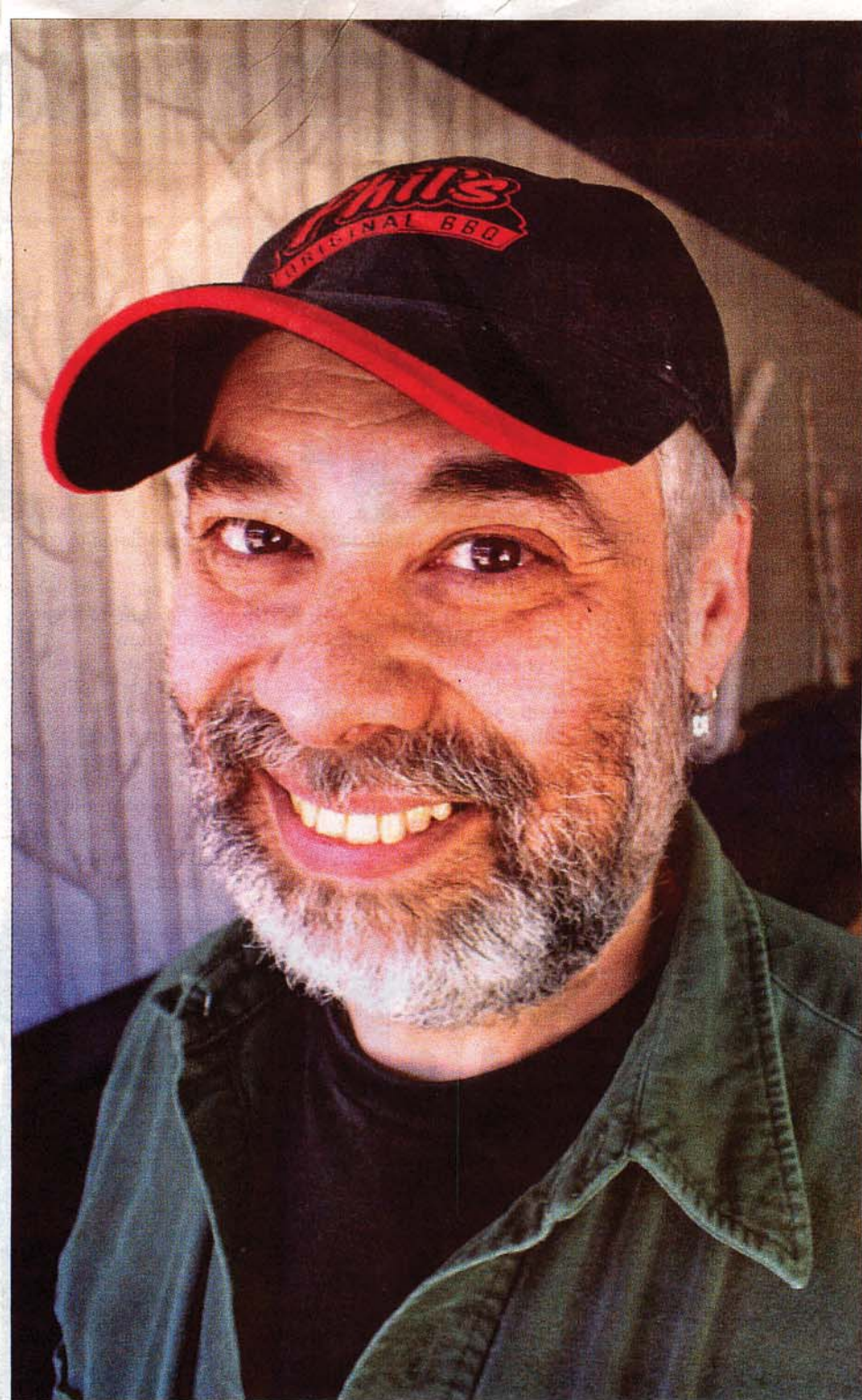
What never changed about Phil's restaurant is the meat — the chicken, ribs, brisket and shoulder he cooks on a barrel smoker in the back before finishing up front, served with his own sauces — regular and hot — and signature side dishes like his creamy coleslaw and baked beans. For most people, it's easy to get

confused between a barbecue — the dusty, slightly rusted kettle or trough in the backyard — and barbecue, the combination noun and verb that sums up a whole genre of cooking in the U.S. south, with its competing theories about types of wood, spice, sauce, heat, cooking time and countless other variables that are argued with a philosophical passion.

"It's almost like theoretical physics," Phil says. "You're trying to find the unifying theory of everything. You try to simplify barbecue down to ... I think it's really basic cooking. You try to cut out all of the unimportant things, and I think it's basically heat and smoke and spices and meat. And on that level I cook really good barbecue — it's just a matter of balancing those things."

Phil has never lacked for fans here — some regulars have to eat there weekly — but he has his theories about why he remains one of the city's rare purveyors of barbecue, while you can't drive a few miles down an interstate in the south without finding another barbecue shack.

"I really believe it's a cultural thing," he says. "We have such a busy lifestyle up here in the north — it just seems in



Phil Nyman of Phil's Original BBQ in the dining room of his restaurant.

the cold climes everybody's in a hurry all the time, even in the summertime. In the south people have more of a

laid-back attitude, and sitting around watching a barbecue all afternoon isn't considered a waste of time. Cooking pork

shoulder in your backyard for 12, 14 hours is a noble endeavour, whereas up here people would consider it a waste of time."