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Gypsy Cafe for sale on Pittsburgh's South Side

Pittsburgh Business Times - by [Tim Schooley](#)

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It's a rare restaurant that could take a basic brunch menu item and fashion it after a cult movie about a cross-country road race in which pedestrians are run over for points.

Yet Death Hash 2000, a potato-based dish named after the 1975 film "Death Race 2000," was just one of any number of inspired dishes served nearly every Sunday at the Geek brunches hosted by the Gypsy Café on the South Side.

After more than seven years of themed brunches held in honor of everyone from "Death Race 2000" director **Roger Corman**, to Star Wars, to, of course, Batman, the owners of Gypsy Café have put their business up for sale -- the restaurant remains open and operating while it is marketed -- after perhaps feeling a little run over by circumstances themselves.

"It's been a really painful place to come to," said **Melanie Evankovich-Dietz**, who operates Gypsy Cafe with her husband **Jim Dietz**, who serves as its chef at a restaurant that was also open for lunch and dinner. "Some times life gets in the way of your life."

Evankovich-Dietz, who opened the restaurant seven years ago, said a host of family challenges led the couple to the decision. For much of the past year, Evankovich-Dietz said she spent much of her time away from the restaurant to attend to her father, who faced declining health and then

died in February. At the same time, she became pregnant with her first child, who was born soon after. Now, her husband Jim, the source of Geek Brunch, faces an ailment which makes it difficult for him to be on his feet for extended periods of time, making it difficult for him to continue on as chef at Gypsy Cafe, which she says now is the biggest reason for selling.

An attempt to hire another chef to help keep Gypsy Cafe going didn't work out, she added.

"You can't leave a restaurant alone," she said. "We're so small, we really depend on being out in front of people."

The business but not the property is being marketed by Ross-based **Specialty Group**.

Terri Sokoloff, principal of Specialty, said the lease for the space can be renegotiated. The list price for the business is \$100,000, or \$110,000 including a liquor license. The restaurant is located in the back of a 156-year-old former church off Carson Street close to **City Theatre** and seats about 50.

Don Carlson, principal of Carlson & Associates Real Estate Services, Inc., said Gypsy Cafe had carved out a niche for itself but wondered if the location made it challenging to generate business from other sources beyond the neighboring City Theatre.

"They had kind of a cult following," said Carlson.

As one of a number of local restaurateurs who jumped into the business after working for the big Burrito Group, Evankovich-Dietz said the business was profitable and the facility has a kitchen large enough to pursue catering assignments, a venture she had planned to pursue.

"Ideally, what we're looking for is a good match for this place," she said. "It has been a special home for a hell of a lot of people, us included."

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