

## 'Cosmic Dave' Lombardy has sub-shop chain fame: Sarah Crump's My Cleveland

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on May 09, 2010 at 10:00 AM, updated May 10, 2010 at 9:43 AM



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Dealer

Cosmic Dave (David Lombardy) is very particular about his business, but it's paying off.

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Cosmic Dave (real name, David Lombardy) woke up one day and decided to go into the sub business, serving up one of the most popular sandwich menus in Cleveland. The original Chagrin Falls Dave's Cosmic Subs, founded in 1997, spawned what is soon to be 15 shops.

Shortly after graduating from Beachwood High School, Lombardy (who won't give his age) left for California and an acting and singing career.

But he came home to Cleveland. "There's an old saying that if you can make it in Cleveland, you can make it anywhere," said Lombardy of Moreland Hills, who is so particular about his business that when he wanted rolls with just the right crustiness for his subs, he bought a bread company.

**Tell us about a famous customer.**

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Last summer, Geraldo Rivera walked in. There was not a single other customer in the store. I had just hired a new girl who was clueless as to who he was. He walked up to the counter to ask about the subs, and while this was going on, about 40 people came into the store.

He asked, "How's the tuna?" I told him we make it fresh every day. He said, "Great! I'll take it." All of a sudden, people started shouting out, "I'll take tuna," "Me too," and "I'll take one." He just stood there and looked at me, shrugging with a smile.

### **What local music venues do you like?**

I am not a fan of the newer music coming out. I tend to listen to music between the periods of the early '60s to the early '80s. I like smaller venues like House of Blues and Beachland.

### **What were the last musicians you heard recently in Cleveland?**

The Zombies, Glenn Schwartz and Roger Daltrey.

### **Where do you jog?**

Along Chagrin River Road and in the Cleveland Metroparks [South Chagrin Reservation]. There's nothing better than nature, the birds chirping, squirrels running up and down trees and the sound of that magnificent Chagrin River. It puts you in another world.

### **What was your first job?**

When I was 12 years old, I worked for my father at Seaway Foods. I worked in the rail cars -- we had a train that went through the building. I unloaded charcoal -- coughed up coal for days.

### **Tell us how you met your wife, Maryann.**

I had just gotten back from California -- I was working for my father at the time. I was walking around Beachwood Place when I noticed this girl behind the counter at Connie Shoes. I walked in, introduced myself and asked her out. That bombed. It finally took around four times before she said yes. A year later, we got married.

### **What was your favorite sandwich while growing up in Beachwood?**

Back in high school, I'd get home late, and Dad would get up. We'd make these great capicola sandwiches, always eating over the kitchen sink. We had Italian bread, Swiss, lots of capicola and juicy ripe tomatoes. Man, it was great, dripping over that sink. A great memory. I think that was my first subliminal message for creating Dave's.

### **Aside from your own, what restaurants do you frequent?**

Hyde Park has excellent steak. Geraci's pizza -- the best.

### **Best breakfast in town?**

Dink's, but they are closed. Now, the Original Pancake House.

**You furnished the food at the Suicide Prevention Education Alliance walk last September at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Describe the scene.**

Great turnout. It was humbling and sad.

**How did Dave's Cosmic Subs come about?**

I was renting a little house in Chagrin Falls. I couldn't decide what to put in this place. I woke up one morning and thought it would be cool to have a rock 'n' roll sub shop there.

**What do Clevelanders want food-wise?**

Our fabulous Cleveland fans love anything and everything that's good. That's what it's all about. It's not so much being different, it's about being good.

**How do you make Dave's Cosmic Sauce so that all of us can make it at home?**

Take some of Jimi Hendrix's purple haze, jump on the magic carpet ride, and when you're done with your magical mystery tour, you'll know.

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