

Doe's honored as an 'American Classic'

Eatery is one of six recognized by Beard Foundation

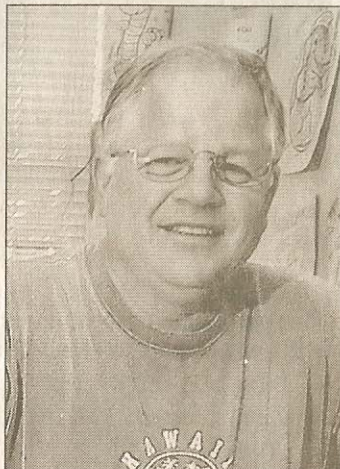
By **JENNIFER BIGGS**
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Doe's Eat Place in Greenville, Miss., was honored as an American Classic at Monday night's James Beard Foundation awards in New York.

"It was like the Academy Awards. It was wonderful," said Barbara Signa, wife of Doe's co-owner Doe Signa Jr. "We felt like celebrities."

Doe's was among six small regional eateries recognized this year.

"The Lee Brothers Southern Cookbook" (W.W. Norton, \$35), by Matt and Ted Lee, who were recently in Memphis and



Dave Darnell/The Commercial Appeal

It's still steaks, tamales and a few other menu basics for Doe's co-owner Charles Signa.

Oxford, Miss., for book signings, was named cookbook of the year. John Currence of

City Grocery in Oxford was nominated in the "Best Chef: South" category, which was awarded to Donald Link of New Orleans' Herbsaint.

Doe's co-owner Charles Signa said his father, Dominick Signa, was a civilian cafeteria worker at a military base when someone gave him a recipe for tamales in 1941.

"He and Mama doctored it up and starting making tamales by hand and selling them out of my grandfather's store," he said.

"Pretty soon, someone said, 'Why don't you start cooking steaks?' " he said. "Then that kind of caught on."

Eventually a few items were added to the menu — a

signature salad dressing, gumbo, chili, spaghetti and meatballs, shrimp. They all remain today, and only minor additions have been made since the early days.

The original Greenville location is still owned by the family, which also owns Doe's in Oxford and Paducah, Ky. There are nine nonfamily-owned franchises around the country; three more will open this year.

Even with the expansion and the award, however, don't expect changes at Doe's.

"Doe's will always be the same," Barbara Signa said. "This just makes us proud."

— Jennifer Biggs: 529-5223

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