

# Fork in the Road: No empty stomachs to be found at the Miracle Cafe in Reading



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By AJ Dome | Posted: Tue 5:00 PM, Mar 13, 2018 | Updated: Tue 5:32 PM, Mar 13, 2018

**READING, Kan. (WIBW)-** Saunter into the town of Reading during lunch or dinnertime -- and sandwiched between a church and a grain bin and across the street from the fire station -- you'll find folks of all ages chowing down at the Miracle Cafe.



"It's great to bring your kids and grandkids too," said cafe regular Marion Jones. She brought her granddaughter Cora to have lunch. "We don't have to drive 15 miles to Osage City or 20 miles to Emporia, so it's a great place to carry on that tradition."

No one leaves hungry. Owner Reta Jackson makes sure of that, with a simple menu full of comfort foods.

"Usually our big days are Tuesday, because everybody loves fried chicken and they can't get pan-fried chicken too many places," said Jackson. "So they come in Tuesdays, or they come in a lot on Fridays."

It was a Friday when we visited the Miracle Cafe and the lunch rush had just passed. There's a different special daily -- from Mexican food to meat loaf -- but Reta says she's happy to satisfy any cravings.

"I like to do it your way," she said. "Just tell me what we can do, we will try and make it happen."

The bacon cheeseburger is one of the most popular menu items. In our case, it was paired with sweet potato fries and a special dipping sauce made from Reta's secret recipe.

Once you're done with your burger (if you still have room) there's a variety of homemade pies to choose from, including gooseberry and cherry crunch.

All of this deliciousness was almost wiped off the map for good, though. On May 21, 2011, much of the cafe, and the town of Reading, was destroyed by an EF-3 tornado.

"It was really one of the most unnerving experiences of my career," said longtime radio news anchor/reporter Chuck Samples. Samples was on the board at KVOE Radio in Emporia, covering the storm that night.

"[It was unnerving] because we were trying to get all of the information out, trying to make sure that everybody's safe."

Sadly, one person was killed and two were injured. Nearly 60 homes and more than half of Reading's businesses were leveled.

Seven years later, and most of the town has been rebuilt, along with the cafe -- which is busier than ever.

"It's where everybody congregates and hangs out, and it's a true testament to Reading's ability to stick around," said Reading resident Tony Wilkerson.

Samples said that moxie is part of Reading's charm.

"It's a wonderful community," said Samples. "I think it's another one of our shining examples here in Lyon and surrounding counties."

In a town with no grocery store or gas station, having a cafe so popular, coupled with people so kind, is nothing short of miraculous.

The Miracle Cafe is open Monday thru Thursday, 9 am-3:30 pm, and 9 am-9 pm on Fridays. Saturdays are breakfast only -- hours are 6 am - 11 am. The cafe is closed Sundays.

You can find them on Facebook: just search "Miracle Cafe, Reading."

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