

Bill Cogan
Cogan's Deli & Sports Pub

The College of William and Mary recruited Bill Cogan, a native of suburban New York, to play lacrosse for them in the seventies. Bill says he “loved the town, worked in a number of restaurant positions,” and what started as a college job waiting tables at Chowning’s Tavern turned into three decades training, experience, and service in Williamsburg’s restaurants, including Le Yaca and Williamsburg Lodge. In August of 2011, Bill bought the Short Stop Market & Deli and started working for himself, and Cogan’s Deli & Sports Pub quickly became a neighborhood staple. Bill kept Short Stop’s sandwiches, but added a bar, four more TVs, and a pub menu of his own creation. Shirley Vermillion, an early customer and founder of the 2nd Sundays Art and Music Festival in Merchant Square, suggested Bill add live music. “I never thought that I would see five-piece bands playing in here because we’re so small, but it actually works,” says Bill. “Our most popular bands,” all of them local, “are Blind and Dirty, The Michael Clark Band, Skinner Box, DOG Street Boys.”

However, despite Cogan’s fun atmosphere, superior food quality, and community investment, COVID-19 safety measures hit them hard: “We’re hanging on by a thread,” says Bill. They’ve shortened their hours to 11:30 am-5:00 pm, because the happy hour business of last month has (for obvious reasons) dried up. “What broke my heart this year was cancelling St. Patrick’s Day,” says Bill. “March Madness was a big loss for us this year as well.” Sales figures are down to 10% of what they were doing last month. “I love my staff, and I want to keep giving them hours where I can,” Bill says, “but if something doesn’t change in the short term, we’re in trouble, just like everybody else.”

Cogan’s is currently open Monday through Saturday for carry-out and delivery. Delivery is free for New Town residents, who also get 15% off everything except alcoholic beverages. You can call in your order, or visit cogansdeli.com and click the “Order Online” option in the upper right corner. And there is a bit of good news—Cogan’s will deliver alcoholic beverages starting Friday, April 10. According to Bill, one thing that sets Cogan’s apart is their “huge variety of bottled beers, and I’ve been told by numerous people that it’s the coldest beer in town... we have a beer cave here where you can buy six-packs and twelve-packs and eighteen-packs.” They also sell wine and cocktails—no one is suggesting overindulgence, but perhaps keep Cogan’s in mind the next time you put drinks on the shopping list.

Brought to you by New Town Williamsburg—stay home, stay safe, support local business. Kit Arbuckle reporting for the New Town Commercial Association (edition 20.2)