



All that Ironwood Jazz with band-leader Dave Jones

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Every second Saturday afternoon the Ironwood Stage and Grill is packed to capacity--some are there for the food, others for the music, with the wiliest among them timing it so they get their fill of both. The all-you-can-eat brunch buffet created by Ironwood chef Jaime Gordon is paired with a two-hour jazz set by the 19-piece **Prime Time Big Band**. Dave Jones directs the crew of musicians who have the honour of being the only big band in the country to hold down a regular club gig. Jones talks musical brunch with Jaelyn Molyneux.

J.M. Let's talk brunch first. You're there to play, but you must indulge in the buffet, too?

D.J. Yes. It's always fabulous. There are eggs benedict with salmon and scrambled eggs with shrimp. There's a side table with fruit and salads. They always vary it up.

J.M. What's your buffet strategy? Do you pile your plate once or just keep going back up?

D.J. I'd go back up if I could. People do because it is that good.

I don't want to eat too much because I get sleepy and I'm trying to watch my girlish figure.

J.M. Is it okay to get up for more food while the band plays?

D.J. Yes, but because the band is at the level that it is you will rarely find anybody stand up and get some extra food.

J.M. You mentioned the buffet is always changing. Is that the same for the band's set list?

D.J. This is why two rehearsals a week are vital. We play about 15 selections on a Saturday afternoon. With about 600 charts for people to listen to, I might repeat a selection twice in a year.

J.M. How did the Prime Time gang manage to become the only big band in Canada with a regular gig?

D.J. It takes three things to make that happen: first, you have to have a dedicated group of musicians that want to play big-band jazz; you have to have players that can actually play the notes that have been performed by the greatest big bands known to man; and then you need to have a club owner who is receptive to having a big band.

J.M. The Big Band Brunch is sold out nearly every week so it's safe to say you've developed a solid fan base. Are the crowds coming for the food or the band?

D.J. I think people come for the band and stick around for the food. The brunch makes for a great social atmosphere. I would say that 40 to 60 percent of the customers are regulars. It's a nice family. They chat, socialize, have their brunch, share a drink or two. Then the band starts and there's nothing like it. There's something about a big band. It's so powerful and exciting and has such great depth.