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Restaurant owner accused of selling drugs with oysters

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Charlie's Original Oyster King on South Main Street in Acworth serves up hot dogs, sandwiches and oysters made all kinds of ways.

But Acworth police say long-time owner Charles Lanzo was also serving up drugs and moonshine. He had some weapons on the side.

Lanzo and his wife, Frances, were arrested Tuesday after an undercover investigation that lasted several months, said Police Chief Michael Wilkie

Frances Lanzo was charged with illegal possession of drugs. When she was arrested police found five Alprazolam pills on her. The prescription drug is sold as Xanax and is used to treat depression.

Charles Lanzo was charged with felony possession of Ecstasy and Oxycontin and felony intent to distribute marijuana and cocaine. He was also charged with felony weapons possession.

Lanzo was charged with possession of non-taxed distilled spirits, a misdemeanor, for the 10 mason jars of moonshine found at the restaurant.

"It appears that Mr. Lanzo was selling a little bit of everything in addition to his oysters," Wilkie said. "We've heard complaints about this for quite some time, and we were finally able to successfully make a case against him."

When police raided the restaurant, they found 2.5 pounds of marijuana. Acworth Detective Mark Cheatham said the marijuana is worth about \$1,500.

Police also found one "small teal green pill" of Ecstasy, 7 grams of cocaine, and several Oxycontin pills, according to the arrest warrant. Police also seized \$16,000.

Two rifles, a Remington Model 700 .308 and Marlin 30-30 carbine lever-action, and two Smith and Wesson semi automatic handguns, a 9 mm and 22 caliber, were found in a bedroom located inside the restaurant.

The couple were released on bond.

"I was at a meeting the other night, and a long-term resident in Acworth made the comment to me that they always wondered how he was able to stay in business so long with so few cars ever parked out there," Wilkie said. "Now, we know the secret, I suppose."

According to the restaurant's Web site, Lanzo and his wife have operated the Oyster King for 15 years.

Acworth Mayor Tommy Allegood, who has lived in the city for about 12 years, said he doesn't know the owners.

"He's not a member of the Acworth Business Association," Allegood said.

The restaurant is open for business. A man who answered the phone Thursday and said he was Lanzo declined to comment.

The Web site tripadvisor.com has one review of the restaurant posted.

The review, dated Feb 10,, says "The oysters were fantastic, although scraped off the bottom of Allatoona, you have to get past that."

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