



The everyday realities of pickle man Tim Baker are not as exotic as those depicted in the film "Crossing Delancey."

USA LEAVITT

## KOSHER PICKLES GO HOLLYWOOD

Strolling down Essex Street, the middle-aged woman turns to her husband and points to the pickle store. "This is it, Morty," she says excitedly. "This is the place that was in the movie."

Many of the customers at Guss's Pickles talk about the hit film *Crossing Delancey*, says 26-year-old Tim Baker, who has worked at his father's pickle business for nine years. In this contemporary romance, young Jewish pickle man Sam Posner (Peter Riegert), who lives and runs his family's pickle business on Manhattan's Lower East Side, falls in love with Izzy (Amy Irving), a chic uptowner who hobnobs with New York's literati. The pickle store scenes were filmed at Guss's.

For as long as anyone can remember, people have been lining up at Guss's Pickles. On a bright and balmy Sunday morning in November,

the crowd gathered before the barrels of sour pickles is a cross section of New York — down-vested yuppies pushing strollers; young, yarmulke-wearing Jews; middle-aged blacks and Hispanics; and residents of Chinatown, now spilling over its traditional boundaries into what was once a center of Jewish life.

As one of the few remaining pickle works on the Lower East Side, Guss's has acquired a sort of landmark status. "We're the only store like this," Baker says. People come from out of town for Guss's pickles, and Baker ships pickles all over the country.

Guss's are genuine kosher pickles. The premises, the barrels, the sundry spices and the vinegar used for pickling are under rabbinic supervision. The store is, of course, closed on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

Though the sign on the awning says, "Three Generations of Quality," the store has been in the Baker family only since 1979, when Tim's father,

Harry, bought the business. The Bakers have not changed the Guss family's original recipes, though they did recently add a new product — pickled celery.

Tim Baker refuses to divulge exact proportions, but reveals that the basic pickling ingredients for cucumbers are "salt, water, garlic, spices."

Despite the similarity of age and profession, Tim is not a clone of Sam Posner, the pickle man of the movie. For one thing, Tim has not found love on the Lower East Side. For another, he lives in Queens and commutes to Manhattan six mornings a week.

Indeed, he hasn't even found time to see the movie, although the store closed four days for on location filming. "Amy Irving was very nice," he says. "She stood on line for pickles just like anyone else."

While Guss's reputation is sure to be enhanced by *Crossing Delancey*, the everyday realities of a pickle mer-

chant are not quite as exotic as those in the film. In the movie, Sam Posner washes the pickle smell off his hands with vanilla and milk. "That's just Hollywood," Tim says. "We use Ivory soap."

Edward Yutkowitz