



RELISH TRAY

Chop's Kall Inn

Old-fashioned as a virtue

By Sunil Malapati

It says something about supper clubs that the drink most associated with them is an old-fashioned, the first designed cocktail. A singular mixture of whiskey or brandy, bitters, sugar, and water was concocted in the early 19th century somewhere along the east coast. As bartenders developed fancier cocktails with more and more spirits and liqueurs, many customers wanted the simpler “old-fashioned” and the name stuck. With a slice of orange and a cherry on top, the drink as we know it today has not changed in more than a century. There is some comfort in going back to the original concoction.

Supper club dining inspires similar feelings. Supper clubs started appearing sometime in the middle of the 20th century, especially here in the upper Midwest. Usually located just outside town in rural areas to make obtaining liquor licenses easier, they presented upscale dining in a fancier setting and soon became the thing to do on a weekend evening. As food trends changed and restaurants started offering lots of fancy options, there remains a hankering for good, simple, reliable, and still somewhat aspirational food.

Chop's Kall Inn comes with a lot of history and represents supper club traditions faithfully; from the red velvet décor to a relish tray that greets you on the table, from homemade dips and dressings to ice cream drinks. According to Allie Sparrgrove, one of the managers, “There is a deep appreciation for the staff and the guests” that informs the place. Allie comes from a lineage steeped in supper club culture. Her parents, Chop and Julie Moor, now run Kall Inn (hence the possessive “Chop's” in the title) with the help of their children. Allie remembers working with her other three siblings at 3 Mile House as they grew up; that establishment was in their family for nearly four decades before Chop and Julie sold it in 2017. Their “retirement” did not last long as Jeff and CeAnne Kaiser, the current owners of Kall Inn, asked Chop and Julie to take over the management, and they opened Chop's Kall Inn last November.

The relish tray is one of the mainstays of any supper club, and Chop's definitely makes you feel welcome when



GROUND HAMBURGER STEAK WITH MUSHROOMS AND ONIONS



CHICKEN AND CHOP



GRASSHOPPER



STEAK AND SHRIMP COMBO

you approach the table. There are three homemade dips surrounding the fresh vegetables (carrots, green peppers, celery, cauliflower, radish, and cucumber) in addition to baskets of crackers and breadsticks. There is good old ranch, Grandma Velma's cheese dip with a cheddar base, and braunschweiger, the liverwurst-like meat paste that was new to me. My dinner companions proceeded to educate me on how no self-respecting Germanic supper club in Wisconsin would dare not have its own braunschweiger. I don't know if I will ever be a convert to meat pastes, but I definitely enjoyed the cheese dip with its sweet taste and sour cheddar notes.

The menu looks very traditional for a supper club. Allie did tell me that they will add soup in fall and winter as her mom (that would be Julie Moor) makes wonderful homemade soups. But otherwise, they were sticking with the expected supper club menu and focusing on doing it well. When supper clubs started, the idea of elevated cuisine was steaks and meats, hard-to-obtain seafood, all paired with robust vegetables. The shrimp cocktail would have been quite a sight—fresh shrimp could only be obtained in the Midwest through refrigerated railcars, and it was one thing that would distinguish a supper club from a home meal. You do find a shrimp cocktail on the appetizer menu here along with steak bites and fried items like onion rings. The cocktail sauce has a nice bite to it.

Chop's offers a few sandwiches—hamburger, cheeseburger, fried chicken, or cod. They also have a hefty chef's salad. All come with the choice of a potato,

salad, or when it arrives, soup. For pasta, you have a choice of beef tips and noodles or classic Alfredo. Our group, though, went directly to the specialties!

If you want beef, there is the filet, the ribeye, the sirloin, or the hamburger steak. The steaks are grilled to order—my friend ordered her sirloin medium, and I could cut off a piece with my dinner knife. You can add mushrooms and onions to the hamburger steak—the portion is quite generous. For pork, you can get pork chops or ham steak. Chicken can be grilled or broasted. The specialties come with two choices—some salad and potato. I asked for hashbrowns with cheese, and it was nice and crispy.

If you want a true supper club meal, you must try the surf and turf, one of the signature combinations to define supper clubs! You can pair the filet with an African lobster tail or shrimp. One of my dining partners had the filet with fried shrimp and was quite content with the combination. You can also pair the shrimp with barbecue ribs. One of our party members had the pork chop with chicken combo—the dark meat of the chicken was tasty and a nice departure from grilled white meat. I never understood the reticence of some diners to try dark meat, with some even believing that white meat is somehow healthier (perhaps confusing red meat with dark meat).

As mentioned above, seafood brought in refrigerated cars defined the supper clubs of yore, and that is reflected in the large selection of seafood on Chop's menu. There is lobster, shrimp, scallops, salmon, catfish, and cod, and you can get them



STUFFED SHRIMP

in various combinations. I was intrigued by the stuffed shrimp, where shrimp was stuffed with a seafood blend and cheese, breaded, and deep fried. The shrimp with a squeeze of lemon and dipped into the cocktail sauce made for a well-balanced bite, the sweetness of the shrimp and the fat of cheese working well with the mild acidity of the lemon and the sharpness of the sauce. The cod was the nightly special on the Friday we went, either broasted or baked. The mild fish with dense flaky flesh is beautiful when fried well.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the ice cream drinks. While cocktails have always been a prominent aspect of dining at supper clubs (the kids can always have their Shirley Temples!), the ice cream drinks also work as a great meal ender. The Grasshopper is probably the best known of these—a great mixture of crème de menthe and crème de cacao served with mint ice cream. I do not normally like mint-flavored drinks, but this was a delightful surprise. Another signature cocktail invented in Milwaukee is the Pink Squirrel, with crème de noyau (almond, apricot, cherry) and crème de cacao. There is also the Golden Cadillac with Galliano liqueur (Italian vanilla elixir) and vanilla ice cream, and the Charlie Brown with white and dark crème de cacao and

chocolate ice cream. One simply must indulge in a cocktail, even at dessert!

The original Kall Inn supper club opened in 1945 and most likely featured a menu similar to what you can still get at Chop's. There is comfort in keeping the traditions alive; sipping an old-fashioned, and cutting into giant sirloin steak. It is as if time has not passed at all... ■



Chop's Kall Inn
 4089 SANDY HOOK RD, HAZEL GREEN, WI
 608-748-4393
 CHOPSKALLINN.COM
Hours: Thu-Sun: 4 PM-Close;
 Mon-Wed: Closed

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