



Darkbird Taphouse

By Danny Fairchild

What a time for beer fans to be alive in this country. The United States has some serious problems. That ain't a hot take, no matter where you lie on the political spectrum. But one thing we've managed to come together to sort out over the past couple of decades... is our beer. After a couple of generations, we've re-established beer as a science AND an artform. Good for us. Just look at all the brewpubs in the Tri-State area alone. There's so many I'd probably accidentally forget some if I tried to list them from memory. And I wouldn't be surprised if I just plain don't know about a few. Everybody's brewing their own beer, and I'm so friggin here for it. In fact, I'm just going to say something that would have been laughable 30 years ago: The United States has the best beer in the world. Europe who, am I right?

But you know what's been missing? Something that doesn't necessarily add to the TAPestry of Iowa beers (Get it? Like beer taps?), proudly puts that tapestry on display for all to taste. Though I guess one doesn't normally taste tapestries. Ah well... good pun, bad metaphor.

Darkbird Taphouse isn't your usual taphouse where you can try the offerings from one particular brewer. Darkbird Taphouse is a taphouse where you can try the offerings from brewers from all over Iowa (with a few taps reserved for out-of-state brewers as well). I'm from Western Iowa, and I love that I'm from there and I occasionally go back. That said, there's no way I'm going to try a Plush English porter from Marto Brewing Company in Sioux City if it

means I have to go to Sioux City to get it. That's just way too boring to drive to then end up in Sioux City. And I don't want to have to get into the whole Des Moines-ness of it all to try selections from Lua Brewing in Des Moines. But I'll boldly go to Peosta to try them. You wouldn't be able to stop me. Darkbird is where you go if you just friggin' love beer and want to try different beers without making it a whole thing.

BUT! What if you're not a huge beer snob? Or what if you ARE a huge beer snob but want to get your suds on with your non-beer-snob friends? That last question was a trick. Beer snobs have all long-since alienated all their non-beer-snob friends. But what if? Darkbird doesn't turn up its nose at offering your classic cocktails, nor does it feel it's above serving your Mich Ultras, your High Lives, your Busch Lights. Folks, this is Iowa. We drink Busch Light here. That's the way it is. That's us. It's time for at least one beer haven to embrace that fact. The bickering must stop, and I apologize for any part I ever had in it. Beer shaming is classist and foolish. A world without beer shaming is a world in which we all deserve to live. I'm not saying that Darkbird Taphouse is bringing about world peace, of course. But I AM saying that if world peace ever does come... it'll come from Darkbird Taphouse.

Anyway, you can even get some local Dubuque beers from Dimensional Brewing. Other Dubuque brewers should take the fact that Dimensional is currently the only Dubuque brewery offered as a hint that they might be doing something wrong. Whether you don't want your beers offered there or Darkbird doesn't want your beers offered there. Either way, you need to get your act together. Darkbird is a sanctuary dedicated to beer. Time to come to Beer Jesus.

Speaking of beer cheeses, let's talk food, specifically pretzels. Darkbird makes



DIRTY BIRD BURGER

their own beer cheese for dipping. I mean of course they do. Can you imagine how embarrassing it would be to own a place that specializes in beer and you DIDN'T make your own beer cheese? Ugh, gawd. I would die. The cheese itself I'm guessing comes from good ol' Shullsburg, judging by Shullsberg playing a big role in many of the dishes on Darkbird's evolving menu. The pretzel comes out of the oven and served up hot with the light toothiness you want from a pretzel. One of the best things about pretzels is that they pair well with literally any beer without exception. If you're there drinking beer but you're trying figure out something to nosh, the answer is pretzel. You can either share it or keep it all to yourself.

If you're definitely sharing, I'd like to direct your attention to the Brewcuterie Board. Yeah, I don't like that name, either. Makes it sound like a flight of beers instead of what it is: a non-pretentious charcuterie board. But I think you'll like what's on it. We're talking an assortment of Shullsburg cheeses, some yummy

Italian cured meats, housemade jams (which I always appreciate on a charcuterie board. Round out that saltiness of the cured meats with some fruity sweetness? Hell yeah, I'm in.), dill pickles, and fancy crackers. A small board feeds two, a large feeds five. Order accordingly.

A word on cheese curds. Look, this is the Tri-States. I'm not going to tell anybody reading this anything new about cheese curds. We know cheese curds. There's absolutely no reason to have bad cheese curds around here. You have all the tools right here. So I'll just copy and paste their description to let you know that they do, in fact, mean business: "Shullsburg cheese curds, house batter, spicy mayo" Nuff said, right?

If you need more of a foundation on which to build your beer drinking session, look no further than the burgers. Iowa Angus ground beef, yo. The Beer Cheese burger has, you guessed it, beer cheese right on the mofo and damn it looks good. I wouldn't know because I was seduced by the Dirty Bird Burger. It



LOADED FRIES

was definitely a case of my eyes being too big for my stomach. Get this: “Two Iowa premium Angus patties, Wisconsin cheese curds, cajun mayo, grilled onions, muenster cheese.” Right? I could wax poetic about this burger, but the best description I’ve seen so far comes from our own Kristina Nesteby: “If the Dirty Bird had a dating profile, it would say ‘I’m not your typical burger,’ and you’d roll your eyes but you’d also swipe right.” Yup. Beautifully friggin’ said.

Beer and food aside... this place is just friggin’ beautiful. The way you can see the lit up sign from the highway kind of reminds me of *Porky’s*, but I think that’s on me. That is NOT their brand. It’s an incredibly nice place with two levels EACH with a bar, and I can’t wait to table up outside when it gets warmer.

Everything is shiny and new at Darkbird, so have no fear of the bathrooms.

Darkbird Taphouse is the kind of place you go if you love beer. Not only that, it’s the kind of place that makes you love beer. This place is awesome. ■



Darkbird Taphouse

7305 THUNDER VALLEY DR, PEOSTA, IA
563-590-7081

DARKBIRDTAPHOUSE.COM

Kitchen Hours: Wed–Thu: 4–9 PM;
Fri–Sat: 11 AM–9 PM; Sun: 11 AM–7 PM;
Mon–Tue: Closed

SUBMIT YOUR DINING SUGGESTIONS!

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE RESTAURANT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE US VISIT? PLEASE SEND US YOUR REQUESTS, SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS!
EMAIL: DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM

GATHER TOGETHER
for the holidays

Featuring
BENNIGAN'S
ON THE FLY

GROUP RESERVATIONS
PARTY ROOM • FULL BAR

FOR RESERVATIONS: CALL 563-690-5600

GIVE THE GIFT OF DINING!
BUY \$50 • GET \$10
When you purchase a \$50 gift certificate you'll receive a free \$10 gift certificate for yourself!

VALID 11/15/21 - 12/24/21.
\$10 GIFT CERTIFICATE ISSUED AFTER PURCHASE.
NOT VALID WITH OTHER OFFERS.

FREE APPETIZER COUPON
FOR PARTIES OF 10 OR MORE, A RESERVATION IS REQUIRED.
VALID 11/15/21 - 1/15/22. ONE PER PARTY. NOT VALID WITH OTHER OFFERS OR ON SPECIAL EVENTS. OTHER RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY.

RIVER ROCK KITCHEN & TAP / BENNIGAN'S ON THE FLY
450 Main Street, Dubuque, IA • www.riverrockkitchenandtap.com