



SHORT STACK



CHICKEN & WAFFLES



IRISH BENEDICT

Charlie's Place

By Danny Fairchild

Dining in Galena is like Rules #34 and #35 of the internet, which state that if it exists, real or imaginary, there is a pornographic depiction of it (Rule #34 of the internet) and if there is no pornographic depiction of it... then check back in a couple of hours (Rule #35 of the internet), in that: No matter what your culinary craving, you can find it in Galena (Rule #34 of dining in Galena) and if you can't... then check back in a couple of hours (Rule #35 of dining in Galena).

Maybe Charlie's Place in Galena isn't the best place to compare cuisine with porn, even favorably, because that's not their vibe at all. But, like... what? Do you really think food can't be sexual? Seriously? Have you never had sex?

Sorry. Here's the point I'm trying to make: There have been several times in my life where I've made plans to meet up with friends in Galena, but we're on different schedules. Those friends are a little tired

and possibly hungover from some in-town obligation, but they're putting in the effort to meet up with you because you're worth it. Or they still see you as an obligation. Depending on your diagnosis. So it's breakfast and Bloody Marys for them, but it's lunch and Bloody Marys for you.

That, my friends, is the Oxford... Webster's... Funk & friggin' Wag-nalls definition of brunch.

That's not to say that Galena has been without its brunch spots. At its essence, Galena is brunch in Main Street form. But let's be honest: In Galena, while breakfast is given lip service as the long-proclaimed Most Important Meal of the Day, the emphasis is on lunch. And that's not a wrong take. But Galena needed a true brunch spot where care and reverence are equally distributed between the "br" and the "unch."

Hello, Charlie's Place, when did you get here? Yeah? Did you know you're cute? Tss, no YOU'RE cute, but whatever. Do you like breakfast? Cool. Do you like lunch? Cool. Do you like... oh, you're open 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., so no supper? That's cool. No, that's cool. By supper, I hope to be trying out all the hot sauces, balsamics, and olive oils I've collected, anyway.

So, like I said, porn isn't the vibe at Charlie's Place, so what IS the vibe? Well

for brunch, it's on the sunny side of Main Street Galena, but that won't affect your hangover much because it's shaded pretty well by the buildings on the other side of the street because it's Galena. But it still makes for a nice mourning-for-morning glow about the place. Not in an emo way, but in a "It's about damn time the world wakes up" way.

It gives the bottle-weary an easy glimpse of what might have been. That's the second official definition of brunch, beeteedubs.

There are plenty of tables for individual parties, but if you're like us, you'll sit at one end of a long banquet table only to have another party join you at the other end of the banquet table. But both parties are able to mind their own damn business with ease. Seriously, my social anxiety had its hackles up, but it worked out fine. These days it is a common brunch thing, TBH. And come on: We accept such things at Japanese steakhouses, so why stop there?

You know what? Here's the vibe, and I can't give a better compliment when it comes to service: It's the kind of place that has creamers in a bowl on the table but their pancake syrup in a BBQ-joint squeeze bottle instead of your IHOP-esque little dispensers. It seems like it's

the kind of place where you'll have to wait two hours for a friggin' shortstack... but the food comes FAST, well before your uncle tells his opening racist joke.

And the food will shut his racist face up for good. Because it's good. So good that it'll shut YOUR racist face up for good, too. C'mon. Don't pretend you don't have your racist blind spots.

Since we talked about the syrup, let's talk about the pancakes. Even if you don't order pancakes, you still want a good brunch spot to have good pancakes, right?

Yes, my friends, the pancakes are good. Remember a few issues back where I talked about how diners add malted milk powder to their pancake recipe? I can usually spot it easily. I could snort malted milk powder like a malted 8-ball. If Charlie's does it (and no shame in that game. It's good because it's good) they use it subtly. The real surprise comes from a strong-but-not-overpowering taste of vanilla. I'm not sure if that vanilla is in the pancakes or infused in the accompanied whipped cream, but after a certain point, it's all the same. The flavor is there, and it's wonderful.

This segues nicely into the chicken and waffles I ordered because I love ordering chicken and waffles. Either the



PHILLY CHEESESTEAK



BLOODY MARY



COWBOY CORN BITES

vanilla was in the whipped cream or Charlie's Place uses a different batter for their waffles because it was absent in the chicken and waffles. Which is fine. Vanilla goes well with most things, and chicken goes well with most things, but I certainly don't need vanilla plus chicken in my life. Two great tastes that taste like murder-suicide together.

But no. There's a light sweetness to the waffles because that's how they work, but it balances the savory of the fried chicken the way chicken and waffles do. And I HAVE to call out the nicely breaded chicken breast splayed out obscenely the full width and breadth of that waffle... like Burt Reynolds' centerfold in *Cosmo*. Hmm... Maybe porn IS the right vibe, after all.

Oh! Since I'm so focused on brunch, I should talk about the Bloody Mary. Look at the accompanied picture. With the bacon and pepperoni slices, and cornichon, and pepperoncini, and olive and celery and cheese cubes (below the surface) one might rightly call that mofa a LOADED Bloody Mary. Charlie's Place doesn't, though. That's just their normal Bloody Mary. I guess that's not surprising. We've been in a Bloody Mary cold war for years, and nobody is abiding by ANY of the non-proliferation pacts. The

rimmer is kind of a peppery bacon salt, too. In case you weren't already sold.

We also got in on some apps. Cowboy Corn Bites, they call 'em. I call them deep-fried corn chowder balls. Oh! Speaking of chowders, soups, et. al., my entree came with the soup of the day. The soup of the day was chicken à la king. My dad used to make chicken à la king for breakfast, served on toast. Great way to get rid of leftovers, which is what soup of the day should be all about. Savory, thick, and strong with chicken flavor, both natural and bouillon.

The Irish Benedict. Fun fact: If you don't serve at least one signature egg Benedict, you can't legally call it brunch. There's a law. Or if there isn't a law... then wait a few hours (Rule #35 of bureaucracy). So what are you getting into here with the Irish Benedict. Well... you can probably guess there's corned beef, right? Yup. Slow-cooked corned beef with a nicely poached egg with hollandaise, served on a wonderfully nooked and crannied English muffin. No kidding: Some of the best corned beef I've had in a while. It left me wanting more. We didn't get around to ordering the corned beef Reuben sandwich, but based on the corned beef alone, it's gotta be good.

The Philly Cheesesteak. I feel inadequate judging Philly cheesesteak sandwiches because they are so highly gatekept that this Iowa boy's opinion ain't often welcome. But also... screw the gatekeepers. Screw anybody who applies their No True Scotsman fallacy to food.

That said, I can see how you might be scared off by the menu description where it says that the Philly cheesesteak has roast beef on it. Even I can agree that roast beef does not a cheesesteak make. But don't worry. Somebody must have screwed up. It's not roast beef. It's wonderfully seared morsels of steak that no cheesesteak gatekeeper could object to. Also, so often in this world, you get a cheesesteak where the peppers and onions are mushy and unappealing. Screw that. A cheesesteak should be a stir-fry sandwich. But 'cept with cheese. And that's what you get at Charlie's. The vegetables are done but have retained some crisp, toothy, not-overcooked yumminess. The cheese is Swiss, in case you have strongly held opinions about what cheeses, Whiz or otherwise, belong on a cheesesteak.

Charlie's Place respects breakfast. Charlie's Place respects lunch. Charlie's Place respects them both enough to do brunch proud. Your hungover friends from out of town will love it. ■



Charlie's Place
200 N MAIN ST, GALENA, IL
815-777-4407
Hours: Daily: 7 AM-2 PM

DANNY FAIRCHILD

DANNY DOESN'T TAKE CRAP FROM NOBODY, BUT HE'LL TAKE FOOD FROM ALMOST ANYBODY. IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT DANNY, OR FEED HIM NOM-NOMS, EMAIL HIM AT DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM.



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