

CHAMPAGNE

REVISITED
BY RICH BELMONT



If you haven't been to Champagne inside the Mystique Casino recently you might not know it is no longer a French restaurant but has been transformed into a terrific Midwest Steakhouse and Seafood Restaurant.

The culinary staff has managed to maintain the high quality cuisine while at the same time reducing the prices to a level more in keeping with the expectations of the local citizenry. This is no small feat and must be attributed to the creativity and experience of Champagne's management.

John Torres, the Food and Beverage Director received his training at the Washburne Culinary Institute in Chicago. He has had a long career as a chef and has learned from French Master Chefs at Maxim's de Paris and LaTour, both in Chicago.

Scott Mullin is the Executive Chef. He studied at the Iowa Culinary Institute and was a Chef at Christopher's in Des Moines and Executive Sous-Chef at the Des Moines Club.

Lisa Dalsing, the Food and Beverage Manger just celebrated her 20th year at the Mystique Casino.



The newest member of the culinary management team is Chef de Cuisine Benjamin Donovan. He is only 27 years old and already he is an accomplished chef. Ben graduated from Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, IA in 2008 with

a degree in culinary arts. He cooked at Loras College and the University of Dubuque before being appointed Chef de Cuisine at Champagne seven months ago.

This is the kind of restaurant where it is almost necessary to begin your dinner with some appetizers because there are so many different flavors to choose from. Counting the Flat Breads there are twelve starters to enjoy. Some of the standouts are:



Beef Tenderloin Crostini – (kroh-STEE-nee) - The word means "little toasts" so pepper crusted beef with horseradish cream are placed on thin slices of toasted bread.

Shrimps de Jonghe – a casserole of whole peeled shrimp baked with garlic sherry-laced buttered bread crumbs with cayenne pepper and paprika. (Fun Fact: this dish originated sometime between 1899 and 1923 at De Jonghe's Hotel in Chicago. The recipe is attributed to the hotel's owners, Belgian immigrants Henri, Pierre, and Charles De Jonghe)

Shrimp Cocktail – Five large shrimp served with Mystique sauce: cognac and mayonnaise are added to traditional cocktail sauce making it creamier.



Stuffed Mushrooms – Crimini (kree-MEE-nee) mushroom caps are stuffed with Italian sausage and Mediterranean seasoning.

Crab Cakes – lump crab is mixed with carrots, celery and red peppers and is served with a bacon butter sauce and lemon aioli.

Bruschetta (bru-sketta) – In Italian the consonant "ch" has a hard "k" sound. Grilled bread rubbed with garlic is topped with chopped tomatoes, olive oil, basil and salt.

Baked French Onion Soup – slow cooked caramelized onions are added to a rich beef broth. Then it is baked in a crock covered with Swiss and Smoked Gouda cheese producing a crusty topping.

The steaks are aged, hand-cut Certified Black Angus and are flame broiled on the grill. (Fun Fact: the beef is Aberdeen Black Angus native to Scotland. In the United States Red Angus and Black Angus are considered separate breeds. Black Angus is the most common breed of cattle in this country because it is prized for its marbling qualities).



The Ribeye is 14 ounces of tender flavor enhanced by a marbling of fat while the Kansas City Strip offers a more intense savory beef taste. A Kansas City Strip and a New York Strip Steak are both a cut of meat from

the short loin so they are really the same thing. Both can be supplied as boneless or bone-in. In most restaurants a New York Strip is boneless but a Kansas City Strip could include a bone or it might not. Here at Champagne the strip does have a bone making for a sweeter flavor.



Prime Rib is available on Friday and Saturday nights. It is rubbed with garlic, cracked black pepper and kosher salt and slow roasted.

The most popular steak is the Porterhouse. This marvelous pound and a half of beef is essentially an oversized T-bone steak. It has a large tenderloin on one side of the bone and a huge New York Strip on the other.

The steaks are char broiled to delicious but it is always fun to order one of the signature toppings to enhance your taste: Brandy Peppercorn Sauce, Gorgonzola Butter, or Sautéed Mushrooms & Onions.



The Pork dishes are a pretty neat alternative when you don't feel like having beef. The Bacon Wrapped Pork Tenderloin is prepared with a béchamel and White Wine and Gouda Cheese sauce. The Baby Back Ribs are slow roasted 5 to 6 hours with Chef Ben's personal homemade seasoning rub. You choose Honey BBQ or homemade Citrus Chipotle Sauce or you might find no sauce is even better for enjoying Ben's special seasoning.



The Seafood delights are so good you might think you are in a fish shanty on the coast rather than in a Casino on the Mississippi River.



Salmon 2 Ways – an 8 ounce salmon filet is hand cut and then prepared with either Dijon mustard and parmesan breadcrumbs or browned in an olive oil with Cajun seasoning. Or you can order the way Julie on my tasting team did and get half mustard and half Cajun.

Crab Legs – These are sweet, tasty Alaskan Kink Crab Legs possessing a succulent texture. (Fun Fact: Crab legs are cooked right on the fishing boats or immediately after the boats dock. They are caught, cooked, then blast frozen to preserve the fresh taste).



Scallops & Shrimp – the scallops are Northern Atlantic wild caught and are quite large. They are 13 to 15 per pound and are bacon wrapped.

Lobster Tail – these tails are an impressive 12 to 14 ounces and are from Northern Maine. (Fun Fact: Maine lobsters can reach a body length of 25 inches and can weigh as much as 44 pounds. The Maine lobster is the heaviest crustacean in the world).

Catch of the Week – each week Chef Ben chooses a fish he would like you to try. Last week his choice was Blackened Marlin. It was rubbed with oil and blackened then finished in the oven and topped with pineapple salsa.

Those who love chicken will not be disappointed here either. You can choose:

Chicken Florentine – a chicken breast is stuffed with a homemade Florentine filling of spinach and a cream sauce made from spinach, basil, sundried tomatoes and seasonings in a béchamel sauce. Florentine (floor-en-TEEN) means a food is prepared in the style of the Italian region of Florence. It is always characterized by the inclusion of spinach.



Chicken Scaloppini – (skol-a-PEE-nee) - this is a thin scallop of meat, in this case chicken, which is dredged in flour and sautéed. The scaloppini can be ordered in three styles:

Kiev – the chicken is pan fried and topped with herb butter.

Marsala – sautéed with mushrooms in a Marsala wine sauce.

Piccata – sautéed in lemon, garlic, white wine and capers.

By now you might think you'll have to have many date nights to try all these tremendous dishes. But there's more!

The House Specialties include:



Seafood Capellini – scallops, shrimp and mussels over capellini pasta with a lemon garlic and white wine sauce.

Veal Piccata – veal prepared the same as the Chicken Scaloppini Piccata and served over angel hair pasta.

So now you might ask what the difference between Angel Hair and Capellini is. Capellini (kap-pay-LEE-nee) means "little hairs" and refers to a very fine spaghetti. Capelli d' Angelo literally means angel hair and in Italy angel hair is even thinner than capellini. In this country the two names are used interchangeably.

Rack of Lamb – a Frenched rack is rubbed with Dijon mustard, garlic and herbed bread crumbs and is pan roasted. There are only a couple of places in this area where you will find lamb on the menu!

Roasted Vegetable Orecchiette (or-ay-key-eh-teh) – the translation from Italian is literally "small ear" and refers to round pasta resembling ears. Here the pasta is tossed with onions, carrots, mushrooms and basil pesto and topped with chopped tomatoes.



Filet of Beef Oscar – beef tenderloin medallions topped with lump crab, asparagus and finished with a Béarnaise sauce.



And like I always say: a fine dinner calls for a scrumptious dessert. The Brownie Cheesecake is made with orange stout beer. You can order New

York Cheesecake with seasonal berries or turtle style. The chocolate cake is layers separated by chocolate mousse and the Apple Crisp a la Mode is made in-house. I highly recommend this one because fire roasted apples seasoned with cinnamon and sugar are topped with oatmeal, brown sugar, butter, vanilla ice cream and caramel.

Champagne can accommodate large groups and has so many tastes there is something for everybody. As they say in the Casino: What's Your Mystique?

CHAMPAGNE

1855 Greyhound Park Road, Dubuque, IA

563-582-6822 • MystiqueDBQ.com

Hours: Wed–Thu: 5–9 PM; Fri–Sat: 5–10 PM; Sun–Tue: Closed

Dining Style: Casual

Noise Level: Loud when full

Recommendations: Appetizers: Baked French Onion Soup, Shrimp Cocktail, Crab Cakes, Stuffed Mushrooms
Entrées: Filet Mignon, Kansas City Strip, Ribeye, Porterhouse, Salmon 2 Ways, Bacon Wrapped Scallops & Shrimp, Lobster Tail, Chicken Scaloppini, Veal Piccata, Seafood Capellini, Rack of Lamb, Filet of Beef Oscar, Apple Crisp A La Mode

Liquor Service: Full Bar, Flavored Martinis, Dessert Drinks

Prices: Appetizers: \$4.95–\$10.95; Entrées: \$14.95–\$45.95

Pay Options: Cash, All Major Credit Cards, No Checks, ATM on premises

Accessibility: Ramp in Casino

Kids Policy: No one under 21 admitted

Reservations: Recommended on Fri & Sat

Catering: Yes – private parties on premises only

Take Out: Yes • **Delivery:** No

Parking: Free Valet Parking or large private lot