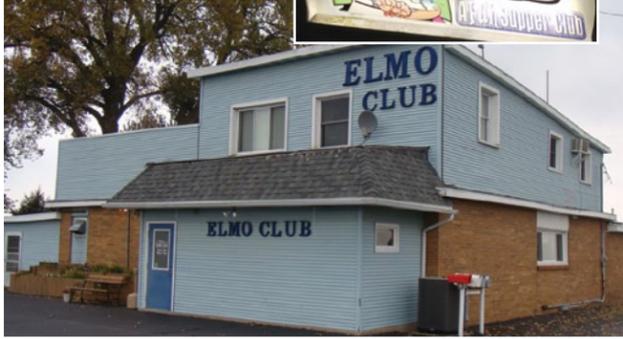




Elmo Club
by Rich Belmont



Contrary to popular opinion the namesake of Elmo Club is not Tickle Me Elmo. In fact it is named after Elmo, an unincorporated community located in Smelser, WI. For the record it is on Wisconsin State Highway 80 between Platteville and Cuba City. It has a Platteville address but is actually situated closer to Cuba City.

Elmo Club is inside a building that is over 200 years old. In 1854 it was a tavern called Junction House operated by a Mr. Emanuel Whitham. It was turned into a railroad depot in 1875, became a post office a year later and a general store sometime after that. Eventually, Mr. Don Brown purchased the building and started Elmo Club.

In 1963 Jim and Alverna Lewis took over the Elmo Club and expanded it into the full menu Supper Club we know today serving hand-cut steaks, BBQ ribs, fried chicken and fresh seafood along with an all-you-can-eat soup and salad bar. Consistently good food at very reasonable prices became the name of the game.



Their daughter Donna and her husband Randy Wisdom came into the business in 1983 and purchased it from Donna's parents in 1987.

If you are wondering how a successful restaurant can exist in the middle of nowhere next to the Highway Feed Grain Elevator consider it has now been in the same family for 50 years!

In keeping with Supper Club tradition Elmo Club is only open for dinner. The menu is in keeping with the classic Supper Club style. It lists a wide variety of items including six char-broiled steaks, fried chicken, shish-ka-bobs, nine seafood entrées plus several other pork, poultry and pasta dishes. The relish tray has been replaced by the all-you-can-eat salad bar.

When you visit Elmo Club you are greeted with a hearty welcome. Randy and Donna and sometimes their kids, Mike, Scott and Elizabeth and their entire staff, some of whom have been with them for over 20 years, are always happy to see you. Of course, this might be because, like I said, Elmo Club is in the middle of nowhere!

You can be shown to a table right away or better yet, take a seat at the bar. This place is well known for Old Fashioneds. They are made by muddling sugar with bitters then adding whiskey or brandy, an orange slice and a cherry. The recipe sounds simple but only an experienced mixologist can make them really well!



Before you place your order for dinner your server will bring you some delicious homemade cheese spread. After all, Wisconsin is the cheese state. Then help yourself to the salad bar. The coleslaw, pasta salad and Braunschweiger are homemade as well. So are the home-style soups made by Donna's Mom. You will usually find Chicken Noodle or Creamy Potato.



It's easy to fill up on salad but I recommend you save room for appetizers. I suggest the irresistible homemade hand-battered and hand-dipped Onion Rings. I also encourage you to try the delectable Shrimp Cocktail consisting of 5 jumbo shrimp served with homemade cocktail sauce (right).

On a couple of recent visits members of my tasting team enjoyed a sampling of several entrées.

Our waitresses were extremely accommodating in helping us choose what to order. They certainly knew how everything on the menu was prepared. This is not surprising since Elizabeth Wisdom virtually grew up in this restaurant and Jannan Steffes has been serving here for over 25 years.



The Fried Chicken is particularly tasty. It is lightly breaded and cooked under low pressure. I had the Thai Fried Chicken and Ribs combination (below). The half chicken was fried with a wonderful Thai sweet chili sauce and served extra crispy just the way I like it. The ribs were simply delectable. Smoked pork back ribs supplied by Weber Meats in Cuba City, WI (www.webermeats.com) are baked in a homemade BBQ sauce made from a secret list of ingredients.



Elmo Club
3825 State Road 80, Platteville, WI 53818
608-744-8887 | Facebook.com "The Elmo Club"
HOURS: Wed – Sun: 5 pm – Close, Mon – Tue: Closed
DINING STYLE: Come as you are
NOISE LEVEL: Conversational
RECOMMENDATIONS: Shrimp Cocktail, Onion Rings, Half Fried Chicken, Chicken with Thai Chili Sauce, BBQ Ribs, Prime Rib, Shrimp Stir-Fry, Ribeye & Broiled Scallops Combo, Fettuccine Alfredo, Fried Cod, Ice Cream Sundaes, Old Fashioned Cocktails, Coffee
LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, Signature Old Fashioneds
PRICE RANGE: \$9.95 - \$16.95
PAY OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, Local Checks, MC & Visa
ACCESSIBILITY: Ramp on Northside Entrance
KIDS POLICY: Menu, Booster, Highchairs
RESERVATIONS: Recommended
CATERING: No **TAKE OUT:** Yes **DELIVERY:** No
PARKING: Private Lot



The Ribeye was char-broiled and smothered under a deep pile of savory fresh cut mushrooms and onions. Their flavor was nicely offset with broiled scallops accompanied by a luscious garlicky drawn butter (above).

The Shish-Ka-Bobs are grilled on skewers and the skewers are removed before serving. A 10 ounce sirloin steak is cubed and the peppers, onions, tomatoes and mushrooms are not cut until you order this dish.

The Stir-Fry is really good. Your choice of chicken or shrimp is tossed with water chestnuts, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and sugar snap peas. You can also request the addition of other vegetables like green beans.



Margie was immensely happy with her salmon. She ordered it with lemon and garlic and said it was broiled perfectly. You can also order it served plain, Cajun style or with that wonderful Thai chili sauce.

Randy doesn't like to brag so I will say his Fettuccine Alfredo is excellent. This sauce is a work of art. Just to give you an idea of how much work goes into his Alfredo I will tell you he mixes melted butter, garlic, parsley, basil, oregano, cream cheese, cheddar, mozzarella, parmesan, flour, corn starch, half and half and whipped cream altogether and then simmers it in a double boiler.



The Elmo Club signature dish has to be the Prime Rib served on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. A Beef Rib Roast, aka Prime Rib, is served in most supper clubs. It is one of the eight primal cuts of beef and is one of the most tender, flavorful cuts of meat money can buy. It is called a Standing Rib Roast because it is usually broiled in a standing position with ribs stacked vertically. Restaurants purchase Prime Rib with a sweet, white fat evenly covering the ribs.

The Elmo Club Prime Rib is excellent. That's because it is hand rubbed with special seasonings and then cooked the old fashioned way. First the roast is seared on all sides until the meat starts to develop a dark crust. Then it is roasted until a meat thermometer registers 130° in the thickest part.



Oh, and those hand rubbed seasonings I mentioned? Those are Wun-Doe-Mus all purpose Creole Spice Blend from Platteville, WI. The blend contains 14 spices mixed in a carefully measured ratio. It features lower salt content and no calories, fat, cholesterol or MSG. It was developed by Scott Patchin (Red Pepper) and Tud Bowden (Colonel Wun-Do) who formed the company Wun-Doe-Mus (www.wundo.com).

You may not have heard of Wun-Doe-Mus. But it is available in several local grocery stores listed on their website. Maybe the company's Wundo Band rings a bell. Tud Bowden (Colonel Wun-Do), Dana Meadows (Pappy Paprika), Bill Day (Thyme O'Day) and Terry Cushman (Sweet Basil Daddy) are a well known dance band in the area. They play several local events and are at Red N Deb's Bar & Grill in Platteville the second Friday of each month.

All the entrées come with soup and salad bar and either French fries, baked potato or hash browns. The French fries are quite tasty and a little unusual. They are straight cut with skins on, lightly battered and sprinkled with Lawry's Seasoned Salt.



For dessert you can choose a Grasshopper, Brandy Alexander, Charlie Brown, Golden Cadillac, Pink Squirrel or request your own ice cream drink concoction.

I found the Ice Cream Sundae to be an especially pleasing end to a very enjoyable dinner. I recommend you order some after dinner coffee too. It's terrific because the well water here must have just the right mineral content.

Elmo Club is a great place for dinner. It's certainly in the boondocks and the décor is circa 1985 but the food is delicious and the prices are a relative bargain.

Whether you believe this little supper club is in Elmo, Smelser, Platteville or Cuba City it's certainly easy to get to. From the Dubuque-Wisconsin Bridge take Highway 151 North for 20 miles and 20 minutes to Platteville exit 19. Then turn right and go South on Highway 80 for 5 miles and 5 minutes. You can't miss it. It's right next to the Grain Elevator.