



Fritz and Frites Bistro (Revisited)

by Rich Belmont



A little French ... A little German ... A little Bistro. As soon as you enter Fritz and Frites in Galena, IL you feel like you just entered a French Bistro. The tables are covered with white tablecloths; you are standing on a black and white checkered floor; you are surrounded by yellow walls; and French music is playing in the background!

The cuisine is Alsatian. This is the food of Alsace, a region of Eastern France near the German border. The land was annexed by the French following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. However, between 1871 and 1945 it switched back and forth between France and Germany four times.



Fritz and Frites is owned by Chefs Fred and Karyn Grzeslo. The Bistro gets its name from Fritz, a nickname for Fred's German name Frederick and Frites the name of the famous French Fry, Pommes Frites.

Fred and Karyn are both expert chefs. Fred received his degree in Culinary Arts from College of DuPage Culinary School. His teachers included the President of the American Chef Federation and the Food and Beverage Director of Marriott Corporation. Karyn was awarded a degree in Dietetics, Nutrition and Food Service at Northern Illinois University.



They opened Fritz and Frites on July 7, 2006. So for eight years now they have been serving the best culinary delights the land of Alsace has to offer. As you can imagine it's a little French and little German. It's also a little astonishing considering all of the food is slow cooked from scratch with copious amounts of wine, imported French delicacies and fresh ingredients. Fred and Karyn farm 5 acres and cultivate their own vegetables and herbs. They even drive to Chicago once a month to pick up locally unavailable supplies like goose liver and imported sausages.

Alsace is the main beer producing region of France because of all the breweries in and near Strasbourg. These include Fischer, Karlsbräu, Kronenbourg and Heineken International. So Fritz and Frites stocks over 100 European beers. They are on display along the wall and you are encouraged to leave your table and discover some brews you haven't experienced before.

Alsace is also an important wine producing region. Vins d' Alsace (Alsatian wines) are mostly white and display a strong Germanic influence. So it should not be surprising to see an extensive wine list of both French and some German wines. In fact wine is in such high demand here the wine cellar is being expanded to include more international and California wines requested by frequent guests who are also Oenophiles.

Sunday is an awesome day to sample Alsatian cuisine. You might want to start with Moules Marinière (Mool Mah-reen-yehr). These mussels are shipped in fresh from Prince Edward Island (commonly referred to as P.E.I.). Mussels from here are known as Island Blues

and are distinctive because of their glossy shells and plump, grit-free meats. P.E.I. mussels are farmed and harvested in 20 months and are consistently good. Fritz and Frites mussels are cooked the Mariner's way in white wine and garlic.

Or perhaps you would prefer Escargot de Bourgogne (Es-car-go dee Boor-gohn-nay). These land snails are imported from France and are simply delicious sautéed in parsley, butter and garlic. I enjoy the Pâté de Canard very much. It is a mixture of ground duck's liver, fat, butter, port wine and is one of Karyn's specialties.



The Pommes Frites (Pohm Freet) are an awesome appetizer all by themselves. A whole potato is cut into French fries on a mandolin only when ordered and then fried to a near perfect golden brown.

Fritz and Frites Bistro

317 N. Main Street, Galena, IL , 815-777-2004

FritzAndFrites.com / Facebook.com/FritzAndFrites

HOURS: 11:30 am – Close

Sunday Brunch: 11-30 am – 2:00 pm, Closed Mon

DINING STYLE: Casual French Bistro

NOISE LEVEL: Quiet

RECOMMENDATIONS: Escargot de Bourgogne, Moules Marinière, Onion Soup, Caesar Salad, Tuna Nicoise, Crepe Du Jour, Brunch Schnitzel, French Toast, Steak Benedict, Brunch BeLT, Tilapia Provencal, all 4 Schnitzels, Rindsrouladen, Sauerbraten, Steak Frites, Corned Beef, Profiteroles, Apple Strudel, German Chocolate Cake

LIQUOR: Basic Bar, European Bottled Beer, French & German Wine

PRICES: Apps: \$4.50 - \$12.95, Lunch & Dinner: \$5.95 - \$23.95

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, Visa, All Major Credit Cards, No checks

ACCESSIBILITY: Front Door & Restrooms

KIDS POLICY: No Menu, High Chair: Yes, Boosters: No

RESERVATIONS: Highly Recommended from 2 to 50

CATERING: No **TAKE OUT:** Yes **DELIVERY:** No **PARKING:** On Street



The soups are splendid. Onion Soup Gratinée (Grat-tin-ay) is always on the menu. Caramelized onions are simmered for over 8 hours in beef stock, special spices and red wine. Then a 3 cheese blend of Gruyère (Grew-yare), parmesan and Swiss cheese is added just before serving. The Soup du jour is always equally satisfying. On my last visit I enjoyed a hearty Lentil Soup. Fred takes softened lentils and mixes in sautéed leeks and onions and simmers with beef or chicken stock, diced tomatoes and smoked sausage.



Pwa-vrah) salad contains a generous portion of beef tenderloin grilled with a covering of cracked peppercorns on a bed of lettuce, red onion, blue cheese, toasted walnuts and Lingonberry vinaigrette.

You will notice Lingonberries (Ling-on-berries) are on the menu in several places. These are small, red fruits closely related to cranberries and are very popular in Scandinavia. They are quite tart and are sweetened before being made into jam, compotes and syrups.

Tuna Nicoise (Nee-Swaz) is another excellent salad. Grilled Ahi Tuna is served on top of tomatoes, eggs, potatoes and Nicoise olives. There is even some Haricot Vert (Har-i-cot Vert) which are French green beans shipped all the way from France just so they can be included in this salad.

The Sunday Brunch Schnitzel is either pork or chicken. The cutlets are pounded flat just before cooking. Then they are coated with a special mixture of regular and Panko bread crumbs. Finally they are sautéed in butter and lemon. The dinner size veal cutlet Schnitzels



are available during the day. Choose between the traditional plain Wiener Schnitzel or the "A la Holstein" with fried egg or Jägermeister with mushrooms and wine sauce. The veal is supplied by a Madison, WI butcher and it is good to know the cattle are raised humanely.



The Brunch French Toast is cinnamon swirl toast with a strawberry-Beaujolais sauce and fresh berries. The Steak Benedict is beef tenderloin sliced to order served with spinach, egg and a delicious Sauce Béarnaise (Saws Bare-Nayz). In case you are wondering Béarnaise is similar to Hollandaise which is an emulsion of butter and egg yolk. Only Béarnaise has a distinct flavoring of tarragon, shallots and chervil. It is a difficult sauce to perfect because it requires special attention to avoid separation and curdling. When prepared properly it is smooth and creamy and like I said, Karyn is an expert chef.



The Bistro Specialties are all available for lunch or dinner. I love all of them; the Choucroute Garni (Shoo-kroot Gar-nee) which literally means "dressed sauerkraut" is a plate of fresh made sauerkraut with sausages and smoked meats. Currently this dish includes knockwurst, bratwurst, Polish kielbasa and smoked pork shoulder. The yummy Sauerbraten (above), an eye of round roast marinated for 3 days and braised in that marinade; the marvelous Rindsrouladen (below), top round sliced super thin, hand rolled and stuffed with a dill pickle, then braised at low temperature until it's so tender you can cut it with your fork; the Tilapia Provencal (Pro-von-sal) which means characteristic of the region of Provence where the style of cooking utilizes a lot of garlic, onions, mushrooms, tomatoes, olive oil and herbs; and my favorite Steak Frites, which is either a char-grilled flat iron steak or hanger steak served with parsley butter and a huge pile of those wonderful pommes frites.

Don't forget, after such a satisfying meal it would be a shame not to finish with a homemade dessert! You might indulge in Apple Strudel with Calvados (Apple Brandy); flourless chocolate Black Forest Cake; Crème Brûlée; or Prunes



in Armagnac (an aged French Brandy) served with cinnamon ice cream. The Profiteroles are irresistible. These are miniature pastry puffs imported from Paris filled with ice cream and covered with chocolate sauce. Or treat yourself to an impressive slice of German Chocolate Cake. This cake is scrumptious and a house specialty. But did you know contrary to popular belief German Chocolate Cake did not originate in Germany? This layered chocolate cake with a coconut pecan frosting owes its name to an American chocolate maker named Sam German. He developed a dark baking chocolate for the Baker's Chocolate Company in 1852. His chocolate was used in a recipe for German's Chocolate Cake created by a Dallas, Texas homemaker and was published in the Dallas Morning Star on June 3, 1957.

Fritz and Frites is highly recommended when you crave German and French fine dining. When Fred and Karyn were first learning to cook Alsatian cuisine many years ago they followed this advice from Julia Childs very carefully: "The best way to execute French cooking is to get good and loaded and whack the hell out of a chicken!"