

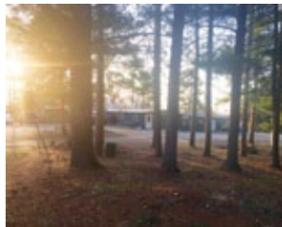
# HIDEAWAY ACRES SUPPER CLUB

BY RICH BELMONT

Wisconsin Supper Clubs are as much about nostalgia as they are about good food. They are usually out in the country where people call dinner “supper”. The furniture was new in the 1950’s and beer is not typically served on tap. Supper Clubs are all about Friday fish fry and Saturday Prime Rib. You can pretty much expect a relish tray or salad bar and homemade soups and salad dressings. You should anticipate eating simple, well prepared food including shrimp cocktails, steaks, pork chops, fried chicken, seafood especially walleye, surf and turf and even pan-fried frog legs.

Some people say the Supper Club concept is obsolete. They say the younger generation isn’t interested in the good old days. They only want to go to modern “hip” places and besides the word supper means a substantial evening meal for rural and working class people and who has time for those anymore?

Well I think Supper Clubs are still very popular. For one thing the food is always good and visiting these places are a lot of fun. And I am not the only person who thinks this. Edwin J. Lump, who is and has been the President and CEO of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association for 35 years says “Supper Clubs have the atmosphere of the common man’s club.” There are no dues. Ed says “there are more than 400 Supper Clubs in Wisconsin.” Now you might be saying how can there be that many?



Well, they are not always easy to find because many of them are in obscure locations. You have to go looking for them. Take for example, Hideaway Acres Supper Club in Benton, Wisconsin. It’s out on Wisconsin Highway 11 only

19 miles and 26 minutes from the Dubuque-Wisconsin Bridge. You go through Benton and then look for a small Hideaway Acres sign where you turn right onto Bennett Road and then look for a sign where you drive into the woods.

Hideaway Acres is a hodgepodge of shacks, cabins and sheds pieced together under a grove of pine trees. You see, back around 1958 a man named William Eiler sold dynamite to the lead mines in and around Benton, New Diggings, Hazel Green, Shullsburg and Platteville. He used this property for storage bunkers and he had many double walled sheds. The walls were filled with gravel in case there was ever an explosion. (If there was one I never heard about it!)

In the 1960’s someone decided to connect the cabins and sheds and make a hideout for teenagers to party. This was back in the time when it was legal for 18 year olds to purchase alcohol. Hanging out in the woods became the thing to do for the kids of the “Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll” culture of the 60’s.

This “happening” place became Hideaway Acres and was operated by Jim and Alverna Lewis. (Their daughter Donna and her husband, Randy, now own the Elmo Club between Cuba City and Platteville, WI).



The current owners, Bob and Sandy Shultz, purchased Hideaway Acres in May, 2001. Before then they were dairy farmers for 30 years. So they now have been out under the pine trees for 15 years and by the way, they are celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding

anniversary this year. (I asked them how they managed to do this and they say they are both just too stubborn to quit.)

Bob and Sandy have been careful to preserve most of the Supper Club traditions. They use fresh ingredients, hand cut all the steaks and they make all their soups, salads and dressings.

They have even maintained the custom of having family working in the club. Their grandson, Kellen Murphy, is a cook and his girlfriend, Sarah Sheahan, is a knowledgeable and friendly server.



The Supper Club requirement of having a relish tray has given way to a very well maintained salad bar. This bar has a very nice assortment of fresh items including but not limited to homemade pasta salad, thick salad dressings

and pâté, pickles, beets, radishes, hard boiled eggs, green and black olives, crackers and rolls. In my opinion by doing away with the relish tray Bob and Sandy have done a great service to the



environment. As in most states, Wisconsin law requires all food in open containers placed on a diner’s table must be thrown away if not consumed. (Not so fun fact: the US Department of Agriculture states 31 million tons of wasted food worth an estimated 165 Billion dollars is added to our landfills each year).

There are always three soups to choose from. Two of these are available every day. The Potato is prepared according to a secret family recipe and the French Onion is made with end cuts from the highly seasoned prime rib. The 3<sup>rd</sup> soup changes from week to week. During my last visit this soup was Kielbasa. All three of these soups were so good I had to have some of each! You might find chicken noodle, vegetable, ham and bean or lasagna soup just to mention a few possibilities.

Before you head for the soup and salad bar, though, may I suggest you savor a cocktail or two? Like all good Supper Clubs, the Hideaway Acres bar staff are experts in making a Brandy Old Fashioned, Martini, Manhattan and Bloody Mary.

The appetizers are impressive. The Extra Jumbo Shrimp Cocktail is a Supper Club favorite and the Onion Rings are freshly cut and hand dipped in homemade batter. Of course, Cheddar Cheese Nuggets are almost a must-have in Wisconsin—the cheese state!

When you are not too hungry there is a whole list of entrées called “On the Lighter Side”. These include chicken, fish and grilled ham and cheese sandwiches and hand-formed, flame grilled hamburgers. All of these include French fries and coleslaw and are all the same price: \$8.95.

The steaks are all freshly cut, the Ground Round is excellent with sautéed onions and grilled mushrooms and the Prime Rib is available every night. I recommend you ask for a Tenderloin Filet wrapped in bacon. Many of the meat items are locally supplied from Bakalars Sausage Company in La Crosse, WI.

The Beef Liver & Onions is very popular. It is simply pan fried and butter flavored. (Personally, I don’t know why so many people like this stuff).

The pork entrées are excellent choices too. The Pork Chops are truly a comfort food and the Pork Filet is exceptional particularly when you order it wrapped in bacon. The pork is supplied by Weber Meats in Cuba City so you know it has to be good.

You will be pleased when you order chicken, too. Only 3 and a half to 4 pound Gold N’ Plump Chickens are cooked here. The Chicken ‘Breast can be grilled or on Friday and Saturday nights you can ask for Kellen to pack it with a sage stuffing and top it with chicken gravy and cheddar.



Fried Chicken is so good! It is coated with original Broaster Company Breeding and fried in a Broaster high pressure fryer.



You would probably be surprised to hear how many people enjoy deep fried frog legs. Some of these people say they taste just like chicken. And I say so why don’t you just order chicken then?) Just for fun check out the frog collection!



There are ten seafood entrées to choose from. You can have your Shrimp broiled, fried or scampi style with garlic and butter. The two cold water Lobster Tails are from the North Atlantic and are a guilty pleasure. The Canadian

Walleye is very popular. It is normally baked or deep fried or

you can make a special request to have it broiled in the skin with butter and seasonings. Some people call this “Poor Man’s Lobster”. (Fun Fact: Walleye is so named because the fish’s eyes point outward as if they are looking at walls).



There are Nightly Specials and most of them are dollar-off specials but there is a Thursday Night Special all serious beef eaters must consider and it is not listed on the menu. The New York Strip Steak is not only a dollar off the regular price but you can order up to three of them for no additional charge. Now this is a good deal so please don’t tell Bob and Sandy I told you about it!



Also, in keeping with Supper Club traditions Hideaway Acres specializes in ice cream drink desserts. You can choose from all the standards: Grasshopper, Charlie Brown, Brandy Alexander, Pink Squirrel and Golden Cadillac. These are all hand-made and not

blended. My friendly server, Alie, recommended I try one of these and now I am forever in her debt.

There are four bands rotating on Saturday nights for your listening and dancing enjoyment. Here is their schedule for the next 8 weeks:

- Apr 23 & May 28 – Back 40  
Classic Rock and Classic & Modern Country
- Apr 30 & May 14 – Cherokee Rose  
Classic Rock and Country Southern Rock
- Apr 21 & Jun 11 – Sunshine  
50’s to 80’s Hits, Traditional and Country music
- May 7 & Jun 4 – Iron Horse – Classic Country

If you think you might be interested in learning more about Supper Clubs I can recommend some entertaining reading:

- *The Supper Club Book* by Dave Hoekstra with Foreword by Garrison Keillor
- *Wisconsin Supper Club Cookbook* by Mary Bergin
- *Wisconsin Supper Clubs* by Ron Faiola

Oh, and one more thing. When you visit Hideaway Acres Supper Club don’t be concerned with the For Sale sign in the window. Bob just turned 68 so he would like to retire if he can find a buyer. I don’t think he is going anywhere soon, though, like he said “he’s too stubborn to quit.”

## HIDEAWAY ACRES SUPPER CLUB

4825 BENNETT ROAD, BENTON, WI 53803  
608-759-4410

FACEBOOK: HIDEAWAY ACRES SUPPER CLUB

**Hours:** Bar: Thu–Sun: 5 PM–Close  
Kitchen: Thu: 5–9 PM; Fri–Sat: 5–10 PM; Sun: 5–9 PM;  
Mon–Wed: Closed

**Dining Style:** Casual

**Noise Level:** Conversational

**Recommendations:** Brandy Old Fashion, Onion Rings, Cheddar Cheese Nuggets, Hamburger, Ribeye, New York Strip, Ground Round, Pork Filet, Prime Rib, Broasted Chicken, Seafood Platter, Jumbo Shrimp, Ice Cream Drinks

**Liquor Service:** Full Bar, Ice Cream Drink Specialties

**Prices:** Appetizers: \$5.95–\$9.95; Entrées: \$8.95–\$37.95

**Pay Options:** Cash, Check, Debit, Discover, MasterCard, Visa

**Accessibility:** Front Door to lower dining room; outside door to upper dining room and restrooms

**Kids Policy:** Menu, Highchairs, Boosters

**Reservations:** Yes • **Catering:** Yes

**Take Out:** Yes • **Delivery:** No • **Parking:** Private Lot