

KALMES CLUB 528

BY RICH BELMONT

I knew the minute I sat down in the dining room of Kalmes Club 528 that I was about to enjoy some good eats. How did I know this? Because I saw I was surrounded by local farmers and clergymen. And more to the point they were all digging into plates full of food while smiling and laughing a lot.

The building was constructed in 1968 and it was the home of Club 528 right from the start. It was the bar and food hall for American Legion Post 528 located in the adjacent building.

John and Lou Ann Kalmes purchased the building and restaurant and opened as Kalmes Club 528 in September, 2011. They operate it in the style of a classic supper club. Some of the clues you are in a supper club are:

- They are only open for dinner (Fun Fact: In the New York City area where I'm from dinner is an evening meal and supper is a late night meal)
- Their specialty drinks are the Old Fashioned and the Manhattan
- They serve delicious traditional comfort foods
- The customary relish tray has been replaced by a soup and salad bar
- A tasty dessert is always on the salad bar to complete your meal



The menu is extensive and everything on it is outstanding. How could it not be? John Kalmes is the fourth generation of restaurant people. The lineage begins with Peter and Anna Kalmes who came to this country from Luxembourg sometime around 1840. Peter was a skilled sausage maker who started a bar business in Saint Donatus, Iowa. In 1933 Theodore and Stella Kalmes built a small bar and gas station across the street. Their son Lawrence (who is called Windy) bought the business in 1956 and opened a dining room in 1982.

Now three of their children run Kalmes Restaurant in Saint Donatus and John has started his own restaurant. (Fun Fact: John is the 3rd son of a 3rd son). He has been in the restaurant business his whole life. First at Kalmes and then as a cook in the Catering Department of Dick's Supermarkets.



Lou Ann started working in restaurants when she was 21. She was a cook at Royal Lanes and Supper Club in Dyersville, prior to working at Kalmes. Their two children are both currently working in the restaurant with them. Russell is a cook and Natalie is a bartender and waitress. Natalie is also a student at Clarke University where she is pursuing degrees in Business and Arts. She is a very talented artist. One of her paintings is hanging in the restaurant and several pieces of her pottery are on display behind the bar. (Fun Fact: The school mascot of Clarke University is Cutlass T. Crusader. I have an interest in mascots since I, myself was the Purple Eagle at Niagara University many, many years ago).

The menu is a wonderful collection of interesting dinners. The easiest way to highlight many of your choices is to list them by section.

SOUP AND SALAD BAR

Salad – the iceberg lettuce is fresh and crisp and there is a nice array of add-ins plus several dressings and at least two pasta salads.



Soup – the soups are all homemade and really good. Some examples of the soup of the day are: Hamburger Vegetable, Cheesy Vegetable Medley, Chicken Noodle, Chicken and Dumpling and my new favorite soup, Pork Dumpling.

APPETIZERS

Cheese Curds and Onion Rings are very flavorful.



Chicken Strips – strips of chicken breasts are hand-cut and hand-breaded and coated with a crispy batter before frying.

Club Combo – I recommend this assortment because you get those really good Chicken Strips along with Mini Tacos, Cheese Curds and Onion Rings.

SANDWICHES

Many of the regular patrons order one of the 12 sandwiches for dinner.

Grilled Cheese – it's only \$3.29 allowing for a quick and inexpensive meal

Burgers – one third ground beef patties served as Hamburgers, Cheeseburgers, Bacon Cheeseburgers or Mushroom & Swiss Burgers.



Chicken – either grilled or fried or in a Swiss Cheese Melt

Pork Tenderloin – hand-cut, hand-breaded and grilled

Cod – deep fried on a fresh baked bun

Prime Rib or Ribeye Steak – for true meat lovers

STEAKS

Ribeye and Sirloin – all steaks are seasoned with Kalmes Special Seasoning and grilled on a flat top

Filet – aged to bring out the true flavor and tenderness of the steak. It is sprinkled with Kalmes Seasoning and grilled. This is the most tender steak and I like to order mine wrapped in bacon for extra flavor

Prime Rib or Ribeye Sandwich Dinners – includes salad bar and choice of side

Chicken Fried Steak – breaded and fried steak topped with Cream of Mushroom Gravy



Hamburger Steak – I plan on having this the night this article is published. The menu states it is a 12 ounce hand-pattied ground steak. I know the Chef makes this close to a

CHICKEN

Planks – strips are double breaded in flour and a crunchy batter

Herbed Chicken – two breasts grilled with an herb seasoning

Chicken Monterey – two grilled breasts topped with a sweet and tangy red sauce



Pressure Fried Chicken – hand-coated in a special batter and cooked in a controlled pressure fryer so it is always juicy and never dried out. Many people call for pick-up orders of Fried Chicken by the piece along with Buckets of French Fries and Onion Rings

PORK

Tenderloin – hand-cut and tenderized in the Kalmes kitchen. It is seasoned and grilled and is always exceedingly moist. The menu states it is grilled but if you prefer you can order it breaded and fried.

BBQ Ribs – Ah the Ribs! Margie and I love these! They are Pork Back 'Ribs, Kansas City Style, baked at 400° for about 4 hours. The meat is so tender it falls off the bones. The BBQ sauce served on top does not overpower the pork taste.

SEA FOOD

Cod Filets – are very popular. You can order them broiled, lemon-peppered, herbed or deep fried

Catfish – whole catfish deep fried and very popular

Shrimp – Extra Jumbo (16 to 20 per pound) shrimp. You can order them broiled, scampi style or deep fried

Lenten Friday Fish Fry – all-you-can-eat on Fridays during Lent

NIGHTLY SPECIALS

There are four fabulous Nightly Specials available only on certain nights of the week.

Tuesday: Loaded Chicken Breasts – two breasts topped with onion, mushrooms and Pepperjack cheese

Thursday: Luxembourg Steak – Chef John hand-forms a patty from close to a pound of ground beef mixed with eggs, cracker crumbs and onions. It is grilled then smothered with homemade cream of mushroom gravy.



Wiener Schnitzel – I will be going to Club 528 on Thursdays frequently for this! A hand-cut veal cutlet is rolled in eggs then in cracker meal breading and then eggs again before grilling.

Friday and Saturday: Prime Rib – liberally coated with homemade seasonings then slow roasted at 250° in an Alto Shaam cook and hold oven. In my opinion this is the only way to cook prime rib!



SIDE DISHES

At Kalmes Club 528 I urge you to choose your side dish very carefully because they are all really good and offer sensational complimentary flavors to any main dish.

There are seven potato sides:

There are typical Hash Browns, Baked Potatoes and Sweet Potato Fries and then there are some unusual ones:

Home Cut Fries – deep fried fresh straight cut fries.

American Fries – baked potatoes cut into sliced rounds and grilled on the flat top (so technically they are not fries)

French Fries – Colossal Crispy Coat Cut Potato Fries. The tasty batter coating on these fries makes them crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside. These potatoes are a product of the J.R. Simplot Company in Boise, Idaho. (Fun Fact: John Richard (JR) Simplot was born in Dubuque, IA in 1909. A year later his family moved to Idaho to homestead in the newly irrigated Magic Valley. JR dropped out of school in the 8th grade and began working on potato farms. As a young man he started buying his own farms. By 2005 his potato farms were supplying more than half of all the French fries purchased by McDonalds. In 2007 it was estimated JR Simplot was the 89th richest person in the USA!)

Sweet Potato Casserole – mashed with brown sugar and caramelized pecans and brown sugar on top



DESSERTS

There is always a dessert on the salad bar. On recent visits I enjoyed scrumptious Apple Sauce Raisin Bars and Oatmeal Scotchie. There are also several ice cream drinks including Grasshopper, Pink Squirrel, Golden Cadillac and Brandy Alexander.



You can book your private party at Kalmes Club 528 too. The downstairs party room has its own bar and comfortably seats 75 guests. All-You-Can-Eat Buffets are served on Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day and Thanksgiving.

Finding Kalmes Club 528 is easy. From the intersection of Dodge Street (Hi-Way 20) and Northwest Arterial the driving time is 25 minutes and only 23 miles away. Simply take Hi-Way 20 West, exit at Peosta and go left onto Sundown Road (County Y21 South) onto Hi-Way 151 South to Exit 77. Turn left, then right onto 1st Ave E (Hi-Way 151 Business) then right again onto Jackson Street.

Kalmes Club 528 is a fine example of small town Iowa dining!

