

RED ROOF DINER

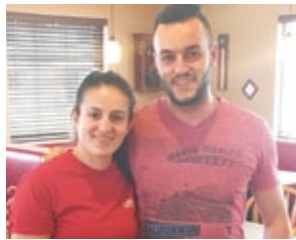
BY RICH BELMONT

A few weeks ago, Terry Truax, who is a Sales Consultant with Reinhart Food Services, La Crosse Division, was telling me how good the food was at Red Roof Diner in Peosta. He said not only were the meals uncommonly tasty but the diner was adhering to that most revered Iowa Golden Rule: "a lot of food for little money".

This unpretentious diner is called Red Roof simply because it obviously has a red roof! It should be easy to find but many people miss it because it is located behind the Quality Inn and Fidelity Bank & Trust. It's a full service, pay at the cash register diner open seven days a week. Breakfast is served all day and both lunch and dinner are available from 11 am to close.

John Nuhiji owned and operated this restaurant from 2009 to 2012. He is an interesting man. He is from Macedonia and was a player on the Macedonia National Football (soccer) Team. You all know where Macedonia is, right? It's the country surrounded by Greece, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Bulgaria. Mr. Nuhiji lived for a time in Switzerland before immigrating to Chicago. He then moved to Maquoketa, Iowa to run a restaurant there. When he learned the Red Roof Diner in Peosta was for sale he purchased the business. In July, 2012 he sold it to his daughter and son-in-law and he now operates the Cascade Café in Cascade, Iowa.

The new owners, who were already working in the restaurant for two years, started making subtle improvements. After purchasing the building in 2014 suddenly the changes were anything but subtle. They painted the walls and replaced the carpeting and light fixtures in less than two days!



Red Roof Diner is now operated by Antigonu Nuhiji (she goes by Annie) and her husband Ari Vrangaloski (just call him Ari). Annie is Swiss and Macedonian. She was born in Chicago but soon thereafter moved to Zurich with her mother. When she

finished school she moved back to Chicago to be with her father. Ari is from Macedonia but lived in Zurich with his family. He and Annie met in high school and he went with her when she moved to Chicago. Ari and Annie have been in the restaurant business ever since then. (Fun Fact: Ari's name in his native language is spelled *Ариан Врангалоски*). Annie and Ari speak three languages: Macedonian, Albanian and English.



It's a good thing breakfast is served all day. That's because you have to visit a lot in order to try all the different selections. Eggs accompanied by three sausage links or two sausage patties or bacon or hickory smoked, boneless ham are always popular. There are seven skillet dishes piled high with hash browns and your choice of meat. Different ones might contain onions, green peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes and your choice of cheddar, Swiss or American cheese. Bryce Parks, the publisher of 365ink and the Supreme Leader of my tasting team was extremely pleased with his Meat Lover's Skillet just bursting with copious amounts of ham, sausage and bacon.

There are 12 excellent omelets so it is hard to pick just one. The Greek Omelet has a nice flavor with onions, tomatoes and feta cheese. And if you are in the mood for a Southwestern taste the Mexican Omelet is good with ground beef, green peppers, onions, tomatoes and cheddar cheese. You can make this a little spicier by requesting hot sauce and jalapeños.



↑ Greek Omelet



The pancakes make for a filling breakfast and the waffles are made to order. My favorite is the Banana Split Waffle: a just-made waffle is topped with bananas, strawberries, ice cream, whipped topping and chocolate syrup.

At Red Roof Diner all the gravies, sauces and soups are made in house from scratch. The soups are especially good and there is one for each day of the week:

Mon - Navy Bean
Tue - Chicken Noodle
Wed - Vegetable
Thu - Beef Barley
Fri - Cream of Potato or Cream of Broccoli
Sat - Chicken Dumpling
Sun - Cream of Chicken Rice



On a recent visit I was quite surprised at how good my hamburger tasted. The burgers are half pounders and are cooked on a flat top. I ordered it with lettuce, tomato, pickle and onions. On my next visit I will be getting

yours with any of these toppings plus bacon or egg.



I have enjoyed all of the sandwiches I have tried so far. The Roast Beef and the French Dip are so much better than what you usually find in a diner. The beef is sliced from the Bottom Round and is roasted right here. I will be visiting frequently for that French Dip. It is moist and juicy with a nice au jus and its only \$6.95!

On my last visit a man came up to tell me he always gets the BLT because Red Roof makes the best one he has ever had. Well sir, if you are reading this let me give you a little tip. Next time order the BLT Club, it's twice the size of the regular BLT so you get 6 slices of bacon instead of 3 and it's only \$1.50 more!

Wrap and Open Faced Sandwiches are always good choices. They tell me many vegetarians come in for the Veggie Wrap. I noticed several outdoor type workers order Hot Roast Beef, Pork or Turkey Open Faced Sandwiches. Huge portions of meat are piled high on white bread (whole wheat is optional) with mashed potatoes and gravy resulting in very satisfying meals.

There is even a Gyro sandwich for those with a taste for the Mediterranean. A combination of pressed beef and lamb is roasted and stuffed into pita bread along with some onions and tomatoes.

While you might think this diner is only good for breakfast and lunch you will be surprised to see it is popular at dinnertime too. Most of the night time meals are in the 8 to 10 dollar range. Waitresses like knowledgeable Jessica Hennings and Nita Nuhiji (Annie's sister) are always ready to assist you in choosing from a variety of choices.



I liked the Meatloaf made from ground beef, celery, onions, eggs, beef base, garlic and oatmeal. The Chopped Steak with caramelized onions is almost a whole pound of flavored beef. I like to spice it up with a little Heinz 57 or A1 steak sauce. If you are a meat lover you might be interested to

know the Top Sirloin Sandwich is about 10 ounces but the dinner size portion is almost a pound of meat.

Annie and Ari are serious about truly having something for everyone. There are Italian Specials including Spaghetti with a homemade sauce made from ground beef, tomatoes, sautéed onions, oregano, garlic and tomato paste and homemade



↑ Fried Cod Fish Special

Lasagna that I call Midwestern style because it includes ground beef, tomato sauce, mozzarella and cottage cheese instead of ricotta cheese.

There are Cod Wedges and Fried Shrimp for the fish lovers. The menu states Jumbo Shrimp but the shrimp should be called Extra Jumbo since Ari orders the larger 16/20 shrimp per pound size.

If you have a taste for Beef Liver you can get that too. It's coated with flour, grilled in butter and topped with grilled onions.



On one of our visits to the Red Roof Diner we met Father Richard Kuhn who is affiliated with the Saint Elizabeth Pastorate in Epworth, IA. He asked for the Smothered Grilled Chicken because he said while the grilled chicken is

tasty by itself it is delicious when topped with mushrooms, onions, red bell peppers and cheddar cheese. Here he is being served this wonderful concoction by our friendly and efficient waitress, Belle Neuwoehner.



Margie enjoyed the House Chicken. I am told many people ask what the difference is between the Fried Chicken and the House Chicken dinners. So here it is: Fried Chicken are pieces of chicken with bones. The House Chicken is made from

chicken breast cut from the bone and sliced into strips that are then breaded and lightly fried. And by the way, when you are considering chicken dinners don't feel bad if you have to ask what Wing Dings are. I didn't know either. It is just a fancy name for chicken wings. They are served plain with BBQ sauce or Hot Sauce on the side.

When you are walking into Red Roof Diner check the board next to the door for off-menu specials. I recently had the Pork over Dressing Special that gratified my taste for something a little different than the usual choices.

The people of Peosta and the surrounding area are very lucky to have a good place to eat every day. And to think the people who made it happen came all the way from Macedonia. Is this a great country or what!



RED ROOF DINER

195 Peterson Drive, Peosta, IA 52068

563-556-6004

Hours: Sun-Thu 7 AM-8 PM; Fri-Sat 7 AM-9 PM

Dining Style: Family Diner

Noise Level: Conversational

Recommendations: Eggs with ham, bacon or sausage; Steak & Eggs; Greek Omelet; Banana Split Waffle; Burgers; French Dip; Hot Pork Open Faced Sandwich; Chopped Steak; House Chicken; Meatloaf

Liquor Service: None

Prices: Breakfast: \$2.75-\$9.45; Lunch: \$3.95-\$8.95; Dinner: \$7.45-\$13.95

Pay Options: Cash, Debit, Local Checks, Discover, MasterCard, Visa

Accessibility: Front Door & Restrooms

Kids Policy: Menu, Booster, Highchairs

Reservations: Yes, Recommended on Friday Nights and Sunday Mornings

Catering: No • Take Out: Yes • Delivery: No

Parking: Private Lot