



REUBEN DOG



CHICKEN SALAD SANDWICH

# TAVERN ON THE MAIN

BY DANNY FAIRCHILD

Remember in the original 1984 smash hit *Ghostbusters*, when Louis Tully (played perfectly by Rick Moranis) is chased by a demon dog through Central Park up to this really fancy restaurant and before succumbing to the beast, he's all, "Good pooch...Maybe I have a Milk Bone." That fancy restaurant was the legendary Tavern on the Green. You've probably heard of it. Tavern on the Main is NOT Tavern on the Green. Tavern on the Main is BETTER than Tavern on the Green.

How can I say this even though I've never eaten at Tavern on the Green? So glad you asked.

First of all, since reopening in 2014, Tavern on the Green keeps flipping through chefs like a Rolodex. The team that is bringing us Tavern on the Main has worked with the same chef for years and years. I can't imagine a bigger placement of trust than what a restaurant places on their chefs, and I'm including spouses, doctors, and weightlifting spotters in that statement. So the fact that this team has been together so long is a testament to the food.

But we'll get to the food in a bit.

Another thing that makes Tavern on the Main better than Tavern on the Green is the atmosphere. I'm not averse to eating in fancy restaurants, mind you. I can hang. But Tavern on the Green has gone through incarnation after incarnation, trying its damndest to capture New York City, sometimes succeeding, often times failing. Tavern on the Main is undoubtedly and unapologetically Dubuque. The decor features prints of the river and of works from the Dubuque Museum of Art. A print of *Doorways of Dubuque* is on prominent display. Beer signage for many Dubuque beers are overhead. And, of course, just about any location along Main Street Dubuque just screams, "Yup! This is Dubuque. This is my home."

This location has a history of inclusivity, and I'm happy to report that hasn't changed. I received some of the most attentive, but not overly attentive, service I've received in years. You're welcome there. It's nice to see that hasn't changed. Muscle memory may tempt you to go down the stairs to take in a drag

show. Don't do that. There are plans for downstairs, but it isn't open yet. And don't let the stairs comment scare you off—there is ADA accessibility down there.

As near as I can tell, the only thing Tavern on the Green has over Tavern on the Main is that Tavern on the Green serves dinner, and for now Tavern on the Main only offers lunch. Once that changes, Tavern on the Green can suck it.

Bathroom report. Also common to eateries along Dubuque's Main Street is having bathrooms kind of carved out of the main floor, probably because of accessibility issues with the downstairs facilities. It ends up being kind of a little room that doesn't reach the top of the high ceilings typical of the buildings of that time period. The end result here is that the ceilings in the bathrooms are very low. I'm exactly six feet tall with shoes on. The ceilings are one of me and one of my hands with my fingers pointed up. So anybody taller than about 6'7" will need to duck... and will probably want to sit down to pee, regardless of what parts you have. And really, unless we're using a urinal, us dudes should probably just swallow our misplaced pride and pee sitting down, anyway. Height restrictions aside, the bathrooms are tops. There's a full-body mirror to make sure you're still the you you'd like to present to the world, and unlike many bathrooms in these old Main Street places, you won't be afraid to touch anything. Whether you're a sitter or a stander, you'll pee in comfort and leave feeling clean.

On to the food, yo!

The food is bar food done with care. Most bars offer food just so they can say they offer food. They'll serve whatever they can get cheap and easy off the Sysco truck. Not that Sysco food is bad. I don't think you can eat at many places without Sysco or companies of that ilk. They make planning a menu effortless, which is good...but an effortless menu sometimes means there's not a lot of effort put into bar food. Not so at Tavern on the Main. Pride is a main ingredient in all their food, and you can't get that off any truck. Well...unless you're buying Pride furniture polish.

Please note! You will NOT be able to buy Pride brand furniture polish at Tavern on the Main! But you CAN get delicious sammiches, burgers, and apps at Tavern on the Main. In fact, let's not call it bar food. Let's call it tavern food. I think that describes it better.

On my lunchtime excursion to Tavern on the Main, I tried three dishes: The reuben dog, the chicken salad sandwich, and the chicken wings.

I'll go over the reuben dog first because if you're like me, you just read the words "reuben dog" and you just about climaxed. I saw it on the menu and thought, yet again, "Yup! This is Dubuque! This is my home!" This is a favorite, guaranteed. The bun isn't some wimpy little thing. It's a serious quality bun. It has to be when you're piling sauerkraut and Thousand Island on it. This bun could spot you while you're weight lifting; that's how well you can trust it. At first, I thought it was purely for structure, but then I took a bite and found the hot dog in there. Friends...are you tired of wimpy little narrow winners? You should be. If not, then what DO you want out of life? We're talking an emasculatingly thick, all-beef dog that, despite it being a heavy lifting bun, occupies that bun from end to end. I mean look at that picture. You can kind of see that hot dog peeking out even through all the fixin's. You're NOT going to get a bite of just bun. You'll get a proper bite of hot dog in there, no matter what.

The chicken salad. There are two schools of chicken salad thought. One is the chicken salad where the chicken is kind of pulled and shredded. The other is the chicken salad with the chicken cubed in there. We can debate whether one should use mayo or the tangy zip another time. Even though I steadfastly subscribe to the shredded school of chicken salad, I was not disappointed in Tavern on the Main's cubed chicken salad. Because, again, they care. It's served on a buttery, flaky croissant that, while the chicken salad is liberally piled on there, it holds up to the moisture. And the onion and tomato I had it adorned with were perfect. Gotta love this time of year for tomatoes, amirite? Still, I recommend eating this sandwich with utensils, because again...that chicky salad is piled on LIBERALLY. Because they care.



CHICKEN WINGS

The wings. Can't have tavern food without 'em, right? Right, Danny!

Oh, people of Dubuque with your intolerance for all things spicy. I know you've been wanting...hoping...lusting for a wing sauce that when it says it's "mild" it is actually mild by your standards. I'm kind of with you. I ordered the mild sauce thinking it would have just the right amount of kick. I was disappointed. This mild sauce IS mild. You get the tanginess of the sauce without the heat. Next time, I'll know to order medium. And people who usually like medium...you might be well served to get the hot variety. Tavern on the Main isn't at fault here. We're just not used to this much honesty in wing sauces. And if you're not into the whole buffalo wing scene, then get you some sweet chili, teriyaki, bourbon, Asian sesame, or BBQ wings. I paired my buffalo wings with the Asian sesame and all I can say is... open friggin' sesame. I'm a blue cheese fan over ranch when it comes to wings... well...I'm a blue cheese fan over ranch when it comes to everything, but that's beside the point. The point is that there are also two schools of thought when it

comes to blue cheese dressing. There's the chunky kind that doesn't let you forget that this dressing contains cheese, and that cheese is blue. Then there's the abomination that some people call blue cheese dressing and may as well just be ranch. I've been in restaurants...NICE restaurants, even...where I couldn't tell the difference between the blue cheese and ranch. Not so here at Tavern on the Main. That dressing is chunk-a-riffic.

And the price! At the time of this writing, there is nothing on the menu that costs more than \$9. Hell, you can get a quarter-pound black angus tavern burger with cheese for \$4.50. Want to add some hand-cut fries (that's right HAND-CUT fries), housemade coleslaw (the creamy kind, not the vinegary kind), cottage cheese, or a house salad? It's just a buck fitty more!

All-in-all, I'm wildly impressed with Tavern on the Main and look forward to them expanding into breakfast and dinner. In fact...I'm just going to say it. I've been looking for a "regular bar" for years now. I'm strongly considering making Tavern on the Main that bar. Or, in this case, tavern. ■



**TAVERN ON THE MAIN**  
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**DANNY FAIRCHILD**

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