



19<sup>TH</sup> HOLE BURGER & BLT



COPPER KETTLE TUNA BOWL



WOODFIRE SHORT RIB STROGANOFF



ICHIBAN LOBSTER LOVER & BENTO UPGRADE

# THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

BY BRYCE PARKS

People often ask me if I've actually eaten at all the places we review for the dining articles in *365ink* and the answer is almost 100 percent yes. A couple I didn't go with the reviewer when they wrote up their piece, but I still got there. All of those serious road trip destinations, I was there. So I've pretty much eaten at about every restaurant within 30 miles of Dubuque.

Which leads to the other question I get all the time, "If you eat everywhere, where do you go the most?" The answer would be, "Are we talking lunch or dinner?" But I think the question should be, what are your favorite things and where do I get them?

My favorites are not all fancy or decadent. But I will say that I do eat all of the following items pretty regularly. I guess I'm a creature of habit, but when I find a menu item I particularly enjoy at a restaurant, I tend to get it again and again. And Kristina from *365ink* has been there right long with me. She's as much or more of a foodie as I am, and we basically have lunch together everyday and we eat out for lunch everyday. So we're like lunch menu Jedi.

So without further gilding the lily, here are my favorite go-to menu items in the area. Oh, and please don't get on my case if I left you out. There are a hundred other things I love, but these are ones I can recall right now that are my frequent flyers.

## 19<sup>TH</sup> HOLE BURGER & BLT

You know what's really special about the ½ pound burgers and the BLTs at the 19<sup>th</sup> Hole? Nothing. They are not trying to be all creative and unique. They are simply fantastic right off the grill. The burgers are always big and juicy with a great beef flavor and just the right amount of greasy gristle love. I always get grilled mushrooms and onions with bacon on my cheeseburger, plus BBQ sauce. And the fries are good too, buy the hand cut and the regular ones. You can't miss.

And the BLT is as basic as can be. So why is it better than everyone else's? I'm not sure, but I guess it's got to be the bacon. They showed me the package it comes in. They get it in bulk from Sam's. They also precook their bacon about half way in advance so it finishes faster on the griddle later. I think it's a mix of good bacon and lots of it. There's nothing more disappointing than a wimpy BLT. 19<sup>th</sup> Hole's BLT is a heaping tangled pile of bacon, and it's simple love between two slices of white bread.

## COPPER KETTLE TUNA BOWL

My most recent addiction is the Seared Tuna Bowl at Copper Kettle. Again, it's not implicate, but man is it good. The tuna is barely seared on the griddle on both sides so it's just warm, but the center (and by center I mean basically the full width of the tuna) is still raw, as it

should be. It's sliced and placed over a bowl of white rice with sautéed zucchini and there is a crazy-tasty Asian sauce over the top. I ask for extra. The sauce by my guess is soy sauce, sweet Thai chili sauce, and toasted sesame oil. It's similar to poké sauce if you've had that. Sprinkle on some toasted sesame seeds and you're all set. It'll fill you up, and it's pretty damn healthy too.

## WOODFIRE SHORT RIB STROGANOFF

I think my favorite consistently available entrée in Dubuque is the Short Rib Stroganoff at Woodfire Grill in Diamond Jo Casino. You hear stroganoff and you think Grandma's comfort food, but this ain't your grandma's stroganoff. They hand make wide ribbon noodles featured in a decadently delicious mushroom gravy that would be fine by itself. But then on top of that, lay on some fall-apart-tender slices of beef short rib drizzled with its own dark beef reduction sauce and the two are the perfect marriage and ultimately satisfying. And it's only like \$27. Treat yourself. It's worth every penny.

## ICHIBAN LOBSTER LOVER ROLL & BENTO UPGRADE

We go to Ichiban a lot. We love sushi, what I can I say. Kristina almost always gets the sashimi lunch, and while I like raw fish, that's a LOT of raw fish for me.



STONE CLIFF CHICKEN SALAD SLIDERS



TONY ROMA'S SHORT RIB



OTHERSIDE SPECIALS



HOPS & RYE FISH TACOS



She's all about it though. My go-tos are an augmented chicken teriyaki bento box and a couple of specific but very different sushi rolls.

A bento box is a convenient lunch platter, nicely priced, that features your choice of hibachi style main entrée plus a big serving of fried rice, a couple of fried potstickers, six pieces of sushi (well, rolls anyway) and half an orange. I just recently discovered that for a couple bucks you can upgrade from the rather boring California roll to a, well, better roll. And my favorite simple roll is the spicy tuna roll. It's just spicy tuna rolled in seaweed and rice and I love it.

If I don't go for the bento, it's usually a spicy tuna roll for me and a much more decadent Lobster Lover Roll. It's like a \$15 roll but it's amazing. I think it's the toasted leek garnish that puts it over the top. I'm addicted. And if I'm feeling generous, I'll order some rock shrimp or gyoza (pot stickers for the table). The rock shrimp are basically firecracker or boom-boom shrimp, Ichiban style. And again, much of this is pretty healthy if you avoid the fried stuff.

### STONE CLIFF CHICKEN SALAD SLIDERS

This summer, Kristina and I discovered the delicious little chicken salad sliders at Stone Cliff Winery in the Port of Dubuque. They come four to a platter for like \$10 and we usually share, each having two. Maybe a cup of soup with them and/or a free bowl of popcorn. They're simple sandwiches, nice and creamy and loaded generously on pretzel slider buns. And they're fast. We can be in and out of there in 15 minutes for a very low price. Downtown lunchers, give this one a try!

### TONY ROMA'S SHORT RIB

Especially in the warm summer months, it's an incredible treat to get the beef short rib at Tony Roma's located inside the Grand Harbor Resort. It's a generous portion, super tender and featuring a tasty demi-glace. If you are avoiding carbs, get the sautéed vegetables and then replace the loaded mashed potatoes (if you possibly can) with the green beans. They have these wonderful garlic green beans that they flash fry in oil to get a bit of crisp on the outside. Tons of flavor and low carb. And on Tuesdays you get double punches on your free lunch card, getting you to a \$10 off a lunch after just a

couple of visits. Kristina loves the Kickin' Shrimp tacos. I can't say I disagree.

### OTHERSIDE SPECIALS

Our friend Mike Meyer at The Otherside Bar in East Dubuque, IL has a different lunch special everyday. You have to follow the bar or even Mike on Facebook to see what's on the menu each day, though some weeks he will publish the whole week's menu in advance. It can be as simple as spaghetti and meatballs, but it can also get fancy, like Korean Beef Short Rib or Salmon Pinwheels. Fridays are often a crazy big buffet with everything but the kitchen sink on it. Expect a couple of casseroles, some kind of smoked meat or roasted protein, fried love like fish and shrimp, plus soups and desserts. And it's usually like \$8. It's insane. Yeah, The Otherside is kind of a dive, but you know it's these kind of places that know what good food tastes like. So find them on Facebook and when a special comes along that makes you start to slobber at your workstation, make that the day you go try it for yourself with some coworkers, who will then make you employee of the month for showing them this gem.

### HOPS & RYE FISH TACOS

The fish tacos at Hops & Rye are half healthy/half evil but all tasty. We've noticed the exact build on the tacos changed a couple of times since we first got them, but it's all within a couple of degrees of change. Mostly the size of the shell changed to make life easier. This is because they deep fry their flour tortillas so they have that warm, salty fried love that any fat kid can appreciate. But then they fill it with great fish and fresh veggies you'd expect to find in a good taco salad. They have steak and shrimp versions as well I believe. But I like the fish, and I often ask if I can pay extra to get extra fish in there. That's the only thing I wish would be different: I want more protein in there, but then again, I'm the fat kid who was lured in by the siren-song of the fried fish sell. A great stop for lunch. Too bad that Frosted N' Filled isn't next door anymore, but Habits Mini Donut Co. is, and that's about the same level of cheating.

Feel free to tell me you're go-to lunch stops and we will give them a go in the future. Email [bryce@dubuque365.com](mailto:bryce@dubuque365.com) or message me on Facebook. ■


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