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Grand River Center • Dubuque, Iowa  
**February 25–27, 2022**

<b>Hours:</b>	<b>Admission:</b>
Friday 4:00–8:00pm	Adults: \$5.00
Saturday: 10:00–5:00pm	Children under 12 free
Sunday: 11:00–4:00pm	

For more information: call: 563.582.4553 | email: dbqhb115@gmail.com



## Town Clock Pizza

By Bryce Parks

If you read the cover story of this issue first, you are already aware of the boomtown that is Peosta, IA, as of late, and the newest addition to that energy comes with the official opening of Town Clock Pizza, just two minutes outside of town in Centralia, when you take Sundown Rd. though Peosta toward Asbury

Yes, THAT Town Clock Pizza. The storied Dubuque pizza restaurant that spent a lifetime in the shadow of the very clock for which it is still named. When my family came to Dubuque in the late '70s, we lived in Asbury but went to the Town Clock Inn for pizza because, believe it or not, pizza was not so easy to find in 1976. Oh, how the times have changed. But what has not changed is Town Clock Pizza's pizza. It's one of those flavors that many could recognize blindfolded.

Town Clock Inn had called downtown Dubuque home since 1970 when current owner Scott Nelson's (with wife Irene) grandparents opened the original location a full year before the Town Clock was even where it stands now. Scott and Irene have owned it since 2009.

The new location, formerly Junction 21, has undergone massive remodeling since the Nelson's took ownership in May of 2021. If you've been there before, you'll now note that aside from the view from the road, the place looks nothing like it did before. Gone is the horseshoe-shaped bar and dated decor, replaced by a new and modern yet rustic look with a long bar where you can sit for a drink (12 beers on tap) or to eat and also where people now order their pizzas. When it warms up, people will really enjoy the new

outdoor, raised, stamped concrete patio with a great view of the countryside.

Taking into account the staffing troubles of late across the country, the plan is to allow guests to place their order at one of three registers at the bar with staff running the food out to the table. It lets them run on a smaller crew so staffing should never stop them from opening up. Also making life easier is a kitchen four times bigger than their old one. But one thing was important not to change, and that was the flavor of that pizza. How do you do that? You bring the original pizza ovens from the basement of the Nesler Center out to Centralia and keep using them to crank out the signature pies.

Accessibility has also taken a big step in the right direction. Not only do they finally have their own parking lot but zero-step entry to the restaurant and patio as well. No more giant stairway to the basement or elevators. Everything is new, accessible, and spacious.

We risked the crowd by going for a pizza on opening night. We showed up 15 minutes early which was a good call as every table was full by the technical opening hour of 5 p.m. arrived. While the menu will eventually see new options including sandwiches, wraps, and salads, out of the gate, the menu isn't straying from the roots of the venue. It's pretty much pizza, pizza, pizza. There is a small section of appetizers (chips and salsa, garlic bread, and garlic cheese pizza), two salads, two soups (one is always chili), and two versions of cavelli pasta, but for now, Town Clock Pizza is all about pizza, and nobody seemed to mind at all.

Not to have two of us take up a table on opening night, we bellied up to the bar which was quite comfy and tried to narrow down our pizza choice. There

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TOWN CLOCK PIZZA'S PIZZA OVEN



PICKLE & BACON PIZZA



THE NELSON FAMILY

are some famous specialty pizzas on the menu, but we weren't too daring, going with half Supreme and half Taco. But some of those daring choices we could have made included the Pickle & Bacon (they swear it's "so, so good", Rangoon, Chicken Bacon and Ranch, and three variations on a Hawaiian Pizza, all featuring the much-debated pineapple on a pizza.

Safer choices might be the All Meat, Bacon Cheeseburger, BBQ Chicken, BLT, Deluxe, Hawkeye (with homemade sausage, mushrooms, and cheddar mixed with the mozzarella), traditional Margherita, and a Matador which is basically a meat lover pizza with jalapeños for an extra kick.

Our 16-inch Family Style half-and-half pizza was huge with 12 slices. That's six slices each. We live dangerously! All pizzas feature their famous light, soft on the inside, crisp on the outside crust unless thin is requested. And all four sizes are prepared in that stone deck pizza oven we mentioned earlier.

Keeping up with the times, they do offer a 10-inch gluten-free option on Udi's crust. It's not Town Clock's signature crust flavor, but at least you don't have to leave that one friend at home! Additional keto and vegan/vegetarian options are on the way when things get rolling.

Needless to say, the pizza was great. The cheese was on thick, and it had a nice gooey

stretch coming out of that well-seasoned deep pan. The light, golden crust is delicious, not the kind you skip after eating the "good parts." This IS the good part of the pizza.

Between the continuation of Town Clock quality that people have come to love and the introduction of an atmosphere that people will love right away, it's a sure bet that long time Town Clock regulars will make the 10- or 15-minute trek west to find their favorite pizza in a new home while the same great elements will earn them a new crowd of fans from the good people of western Dubuque County.

Now that they actually own the place after more than 50 years of renting

downtown, making investments in the venue finally have long-term promise. Scott and Irene are the third generation, their kids represent the fourth generation, and it gives the Nelsons comfort knowing they have something real to leave behind. What's less likely to be left behind... uneaten pizza. ■



**Town Clock Pizza**  
7653 OLD HWY RD, CENTRALIA, IA  
563-556-1022  
TOWNCLOCKPIZZA.COM  
**Hours (Tentative):** Wed-Fri: 3-9 PM;  
Sat: Noon-9 PM; Sun: Noon-5 PM

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