



PRETZEL



PRIME RIB SANDWICH



MUSHROOM AND SWISS BURGER WITH BACON

# Two Gingers Tavern & Eatery

By Danny Fairchild

Bar food has it easy, as far as food goes. Bar food can just sit around and be bar food. There's probably no other cuisine type we depend so much on, but expect so little from. All we really expect it to do is, A: Take up space in our bellies so we don't get too drunk too fast, and B: Not suck. Literally all it has to do is exist and not make us want to throw up. We've all been to bars where this has been the kitchen philosophy. Whatever. There's definitely a time and a place for bars like that. Two Gingers Tavern & Eatery could easily get away with that. They could totally phone in the food. It's a bar in a small town (Cascade) without a whole lot of other bars. No need to go crazy, am I right? "To hell with that!" says Two Gingers.

And rightly so. The location of Two Gingers Tavern & Eatery (231 1<sup>st</sup> Ave W in Cascade) is so steeped in history that it would be almost sacrilege to not try to do it justice with the best food you can muster. Two Gingers does it justice. Which means that Two Gingers isn't just a bar. Two Gingers is a just bar.

You see, there has continuously been a bar at that location since 1891. Meditate on that. For over 130 years, there has never NOT been a bar serving the people of Peosta at 231 1<sup>st</sup> Ave W in Cascade. That's staggering, innit? It's gone through many different names and ownership, of course. The abstract document on the place is probably pretty stinking interesting. It was originally a post office, then became a bar known as The Hub. Over the years, it became bars you may remember like Pete's Place or Dagwood's. Remember Dagwood's? In fact, if you're still trying to picture where Two Gingers is, just go to Dagwood's and you'll be at Two Gingers instead. Two Gingers has been there since 2016, so it seems weird to still reference it by the previous operation, but that's just how bars work.

How does Two Gingers hold up to such a storied past? Pretty damn well. Let's get into it.

I'm going to do something different and talk about the bathrooms first. I've never felt good about following up my culinary purple prose with a description of where you poop. But at the same time, I think people want to know about the bathroom situation. I'm happy to report that the bathrooms at Two Gingers are clean! It's decorated in that industrial style with reclaimed sheet metal paneling and the like. It's a pretty popular motif these days, especially for bathrooms because with a rusty-cum-rustic design, you can hide a lot of uncleanness. But I ain't fooled, and Two Gingers aren't even trying to fool me. The cleanliness of the bathrooms is not suspect.

As for the atmosphere, I can't vouch for it when nightlife comes a-hoppin' as

I was there on a Sunday afternoon, but it very much strikes me as the kind of place where you can quietly have a few drinks while reading the paper (maybe *365ink*?) during the day, then cut loose with your friends at night, maybe to some live music if anybody's taking the stage. The kind of place that has popcorn free for the taking. Because Two Gingers has popcorn free for the taking.

Often with small-town bars, you run the risk of stepping into a place stuck in time, à la *The Twilight Zone*. But Two Gingers doesn't just have a strong tie to the past, it also honors the future with that curious name. Two Gingers is named after the owners' two redheaded children. Two Gingers doesn't seem stagnant or afraid of change. It's a very cross-that-bridge-when-we-get-to-it-and-we-look-forward-to-getting-to-it vibe.

The food.

If the free popcorn isn't going to sate your hunger, you're still in good hands. This is bar food done right. It's not done fancy, thank goodness. It's not even done all that interestingly. But it's done right, dammit. Two Gingers brings the delicious flavors you crave and does them exceedingly well.

Let's start with the appetizers, eh?

I've previously noted that pretzels are possibly the most perfect snack to go with beer. ANY beer. ALL beer. Two Gingers has you covered with their big pretzels. And I mean big. We're talking about pretzels so big that it's more efficient to create a special pretzel-hanging device and hang it vertically than to try to find a place for a plate big enough to serve it flat. It should also be noted that this isn't your

traditional toothy baked pretzel. Nope. This is the deep fried kind. Because bar food gonna bar food. It's served with beer cheese, queso, or mustard, all of which are solid choices. I'm a mustard guy when it comes to pretzels, and while I would have been fine with a squeeze bottle of generic yellow mustard, Two Gingers does you several better with the coarse-ground gourmet stuff, where the grains of salt and the grains of the mustard seeds kind of make you play a guessing game where there's no wrong answer.

Because I can't pass up chorizo anytime it's offered to me, we also tried the chips and chorizo queso. It definitely scratched that chorizo itch. And that queso itch. And that chips itch. Like I said, the food at Two Gingers does its job.

I also can't turn down anything that resembles a French dip sandwich. So when my scanning eyes fell upon the menu entry, "Prime Rib Sandwich" and read the description my only thought was, "a rose by any other name..." And here's a hot tip, friends: Order the French dip at restaurants that routinely serve prime rib. Because chances are, the meat they put on today's French dip is last night's prime rib. Yum. Two Gingers doesn't have prime rib as a menu item, so I'm not exactly sure about the logistics, but it's a damn fine sandwich. You know how sometimes the jus has little to no flavor and you may as well be dipping your sandwich in warm water? Two Gingers' jus for the prime rib sandwich is rich and flavorful. This is good because you don't have to get a huge portion of bread fall-apart soggy to get that flavor.

The burgers.



SUPREME PIZZA

Look, the rest of your bar cuisine could be friggin' ambrosia, but if you can't deliver a good burger, your food is crap. And while the pizza at Two Gingers kind of steals the show, their burgers are incredible. A lot seems to have gone into the structural integrity of their burgers. A lot of thought was devoted to delivering a good-sized burger loaded with toppings, that you can still eat with your hand. Doesn't it just piss you off when you have to use a knife and fork to eat a burger? Mashing a burger into your face is half the burger experience. I mean... if you're anxious about staining that very nice shirt you're wearing (seriously... that's a good color on you), you CAN eat the burger with a knife and fork. You do you. But you don't HAVE to. All that flavor... in the palm of your hand.

The pizza.  
Brick-oven, yo.

Again, when it comes to bar food, if it were just some frozen, shrink-wrapped frisbee with something that vaguely resembles sauce, cheese, and toppings, I eat it and be thankful for it. Nom, nom, nom. But Two Gingers puts that brick oven to use and friends, I would say that the pizza alone is worth the trip to Cascade. Even though everybody has their own platonic ideal of what pizza should be, I wouldn't be doing my duty if I didn't present this for your approval. The crust has some foldability without being too floppy. As such, the toppings stay where the toppings are put until they get to your mouth and you say, "Mmm! Pretty good pizza, even though I like my pizza x, y, and z." You probably won't actually say that. You're not a douche.

Anyway, Two Gingers is where it's at. I think there's some opportunity there for a mini hotel or something nearby. Lots of weddings and funerals happen around there that are really underserved. But I digress. When it comes to food, at Two Gingers, they don't go beyond bar food, but they certainly go above it.

Eat up. ■



**Two Gingers Tavern & Eatery**  
231 1<sup>ST</sup> AVE W, CASCADE, IA  
563-852-3378  
TWOGINGERTAVERNANDEATERY.COM  
**Kitchen Hours:** Fri: 5-9 PM; Sat: 2-9 PM;  
Sun: Noon-6 PM; Mon-Thu: Closed

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