

The Big House

By Bryce Parks

While assembling live music submissions for *365ink*, Kristina stumbled across a listing for Norie's at The Big House in Petersburg, IA. She was familiar with The Big House and wondered what the deal was, so she went down the digital rabbit hole to find out. Then she found the menu: burgers, sandwiches, appetizers, breaded chicken... yep. But wait a second... Asian food too? To be more specific, Filipino dishes? In Petersburg? At The Big House? Oh, we gotta go investigate, you know, for the people like you who need to know this stuff.

Forty minutes west of Dubuque, just a few minutes northwest of Dyersville, is Petersburg, IA. There's not much there save for a church. I mean A CHURCH! St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church. Wow. No offense Dubuque and Dyersville, but the 145-foot-tall church, designed by Dubuque architect Martin Heer and completed in 1906, is the most beautifully impressive church I've seen in the area. It's worth the road trip just for that. We didn't even get the food across the street yet, and The Big House is literally right next to the church. How convenient! If you don't take a February trip out there, make sure to put it on your spring or summer road trip dinner getaway list.

As uniquely impressive as the church is, The Big House is conversely about as nondescript on the outside as you can get. It's literally a big, grey-sided, well... house. The magic here is all on the inside.

We had to find out what the story was that brought scratch-made Filipino dishes to the menu of a townie bar on the east side of Delaware County. That story is all thanks to a very nice woman named Norie Thuerauf who was wooed to come to take over The Big House by the owner of the business and building but wanted someone else to take over the business inside of it.

A native Filipino, Norie came to Petersburg from Guttenberg, IA where she gained a loyal following for her dishes at Norie's Restobar (five stars on Trip Advisor) before the pandemic descended. More than anything, it left her with difficulty finding staff though the community was willing to do a lot to get her to stay. That support shows in the fact that Guttenbergers (Bergians? Bergites? Bergermeisers?) still make the road trip to enjoy her cooking at The Big House. She's still a partner in the Lakeside Ballroom in Guttenberg, but it's currently closed, at least for the winter.

Norie wanted to introduce her unique new array of dishes to The Big House crowd without burning any bridges with those long-time fans, so this means you will find a full menu of great pub fare and then a whole menu page of Filipino offerings. But that's not all she brought. Another new page in the menu offers up a baker's dozen supper club-style entrees that you'd find at the Lakeside Ballroom. There is literally something for everyone here, in the middle of nowhere. You can get creative and experiment with new things you've never had before while your boring friend or spouse (you know who you are) can safely fall back on a burger or Broasted chicken.

But let's start with the original Big House menu. A big appetizer list has all of your usual deep-fried favorites (curds, shrooms, poppers, and chicken strips) plus a couple of special offerings like Harry's Reuben Balls, chicken gizzards, homemade lumpia (Filipino egg rolls),



CRAB RANGOONS AND WINGS



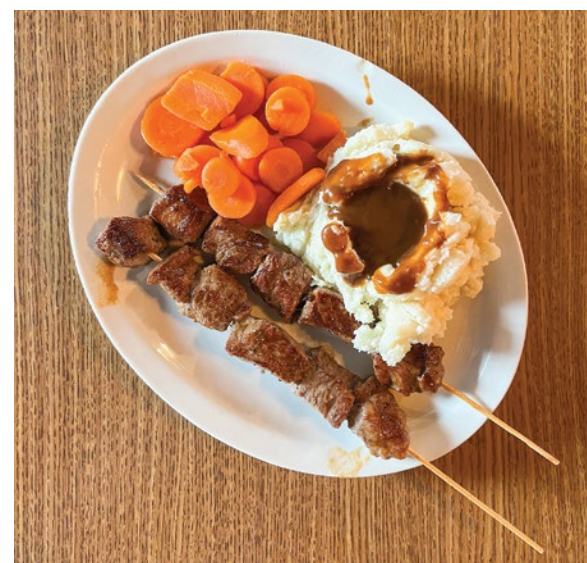
SWEET AND SPICY CHICKEN CURRY



SHRIMP PANCIT AND CHICKEN BIHON



FRIDAY SPECIAL: AYCE FRIED WALLEYE



STEAK KABOBS

and crab rangoons thanks to Norie. The wings we had were a very tasty breaded-style wing. We tried the Nashville Hot and Honey Sriracha sauces with ours.

A slate of burgers is highlighted by the Barn Burner (bacon, cream cheese, and jalapeños), the Petersburger (egg, bacon, hash browns, American and pepper jack cheese on Texas Toast), and the Big House Burger which looks like a tricked-out

bacon cheeseburger with jalapeño poppers and a signature Big House sauce. They also have a pizza burger, pork burger, Reuben burger, and a patty melt.

Sandwiches include pork tenderloin, Reuben, BLT, fish fillet, ham and cheese (we assume for Neil Stockel), garlic parmesan chicken, and a Big House Club.

One of the new pages in The Big House menu we hinted at earlier is the Dinner Menu, a list of traditional supper club-style favorites that take things up a notch. Everything on this special menu is listed as market price and includes king crab legs; jumbo tiger shrimp; lobster tail; fresh salmon; ribeye, sirloin, and T-bone steaks; steak kabobs (we had them, and they were nicely seasoned); pork roast; BBQ ribs; surf and turf; ham steak; and a seafood platter which is breaded shrimp and walleye with crab rangoons.

Lots of sides include potato salad, macaroni salad, cottage cheese, coleslaw, house salad, french fries, hash browns, baked potato, and mashed potatoes and gravy. There's always a different fresh batch of soup available every day.

The Asian Cuisine menu certainly has dishes you will recognize and love including sesame chicken; General Tso's chicken; beef and broccoli; sweet and sour chicken, pork, or shrimp; fried rice; and more). But then you'll find great curries, pork adobo, and a couple of things you may not know: pancit and bihon. Pancit is an egg noodle-based stir fry of sorts with vegetables and your choice of pork, chicken, or shrimp. Bihon offers the same thing but is based around thin rice noodles instead. The flavors were mild, but each was different from the other. I particularly liked the bihon. Both come with lumpia. Norie also added homemade crab rangoons to the Appetizer Menu at The Big House. Oh, and bubble tea has come to Petersburg. Norie's version is blended for smoothness before the popping boba is added.

If that's not enough, The Big House also serves breakfast on weekends along with a Sunday breakfast buffet. Wherever Norie is, one thing she's always had



NORIE WITH CHOCOLATE AND TARO BUBBLE TEA

was an all-you-can-eat (AYCE) fish on Fridays all year round. Friday is AYCE fried or baked walleye and sometimes catfish as well. We've even seen jumbo shrimp on the AYCE Friday menu. Thursday offers a bone-in or boneless wing special. It's not quite all you can eat, but up to 24 is pretty good. And there are creative daily lunch and dinner specials every day to add to your difficulty in choosing. Do like we

do and get a lot and share everything!

Norie also talked about going the "extra mile." If it's not on the menu or something you want deviates from the menu, just ask. If she can make it, she will. For example, if I bring gluten-free tamari soy sauce, she will make the bihon noodles for my wife with that in order to keep the dish gluten-free. She wants people to be happy, and food is the language she uses to make that happen.

The Big House is, of course, a bar too, so you can get a full slate of beverages and mixed drinks, and some nights you'll find great local live music. Food goes 'till 9 p.m. but appetizers can be available later. Great food, alcohol, and live music... how can you go wrong? If you wind up sinning a little, well... there is a massive church right across the street. It's worth the road trip. Probably many road trips this summer! ■



The Big House
 3001 160TH ST, PETERSBURG, IA
 563-875-2612
 Facebook: @Norie61
 Kitchen Hours: Mon-Fri: 11 AM-9 PM;
 Sat-Sun: 8 AM-9 PM

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