

# Durango Depot

By Bryce Parks

In our last issue, we wrote about a great little place you drive by all the time when passing through Dickeyville, WI on the way to the metropolis of Lancaster and Fennimore. You're on a mission, and you just don't think to stop, but you should. Well, this week is a bit of the same story, only this time we're heading north out of town on Highway 3 through Sageville and on, probably to Guttenberg and beyond. But wait a sec... about 5 miles past the gas station at Sageville, you blew through Durango. You might have missed it when you blinked or changed the radio. But it's there, and off to the left on the way north is a great place to stop, not just in your car, but for sure on your bicycle, and we'll get back to that at the end because it makes all the difference as to why this place is special. Welcome, friends, to the Durango Depot!

The rustic-looking roadside stop makes the most of its space. Recently new owners, Hope Ehlinger and her father Chad did a lovely job landscaping outside, and a nice covered patio allows for enjoying your food and beverages outside. But if you come inside, you'll also find a very nice atmosphere. Though the venue has been there for a while under additional owners, it just feels new and clean and inviting. A tile floor, muskmelon-colored walls, and a bar that runs darn near the full length of the building allow plenty of people to belly up.

After eight years of experience at the legendary Kalms Restaurant in St. Donatus, IA, Hope was encouraged by her father to open her own place, as he was friends with the previous owner, Chad, and knew the Depot was going to be available.

But we're here to eat, so let's dig in. The new owners have been here since the new year, and Hope still has plans for new and expanded menu offerings. So anything I tell you about may be joined by even more offerings very soon, such as more signature wraps and signature mixed drinks.

The menu is not complex, but when it's good, you don't have to throw everything at the menu either. You won't be surprised when I say the menu focuses on appetizers, burgers, sandwiches, wraps, salads, and pizzas. But it's not just what you have but what you do with it—isn't that what they say? And we were

more than pleased with what Durango Depot did within their two-page menu.

The appetizers are a sampling of the expected deep-fried goodies (\$7.50 each) and a garbage basket mix of all of them together for \$15. Hope tells us that the chicken strips here are freshly hand breaded, too. We still have to try those, so for us, the champion here is the chicken wings. They were not only delicious but they were also huge. What are they feeding these chickens? They're so special, they technically, are not listed in the apps section of the menu or anywhere on the menu. The same goes for the chicken strips. But they have them, and they are specialties, so don't skip them. You can get a pound of wings for \$12 with a variety of sauce options.

A variety of freshly hand-pattied burger options and chicken sandwiches (grilled, Philly, chicken bacon ranch, or chicken parm) are joined by favorites like a pizza burger, Philly steak, breaded pork T, fried fish, and grilled cheese (bacon optional). Everything's \$6.25 to \$12.75. Or you can go the wrap route with shrimp or chicken and choose your dressing choice including boom boom. And salads come in chicken, shrimp, fish, or taco varieties. Wraps and salads are under \$10.

I might be burying the lead by leaving the pizzas to the end, but they deserve top billing. If you like thin crust pizza like our friend Paul who joined us, you are in for a treat. The crust is an ultra thin, cracker-like crust, that while minimal, held up to the rigors of the toppings they didn't hesitate to pile onto our meat lover's choice. At least the smaller one we ordered was like that. We'll have to go back for a large to be sure... for science. Seriously. So often thin crust pizzas match wimpy topping with a wimpy crust, but not here. We all really thought it was an excellent offering. The 12-inch or 16-inch pizzas range from \$15 to \$22, and you can build your own or choose one of their own special creations like BLT, taco, Canadian bacon and sauerkraut, deluxe, or veggie along with our pick: meat lovers. I'd come back just for this.

And there are specials all the time, so you might find something you didn't even know you could get before you showed up. For example, they're featuring Fried Baloney Fridays right now which may be exciting if baloney is your thing. When we visited, we had to try the Hillbilly Philly sandwich which was made with, you guessed it, fried baloney. But ask your server or check the signs taped to the beer coolers behind the bar to see what's exciting this week. Right now, we saw promotions for a Reuben, a patty melt, and a bison burger. And they have a stunning-looking Cadillac burger with a fried egg on it that might need further study!



ONE POUND OF WINGS



MEAT LOVERS PIZZA



HILLBILLY PHILLY



MASON JAR LONG ISLANDS

And, of course, this is a bar too. In fact, the bar is open until 9 p.m. on Wednesdays, 10 p.m. on Thursdays and Sundays, and 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Plus, on Sunday afternoons, you might find live music. But you will most definitely find drinks. The full bar can likely whip up just about anything you like or browse the nice cold selection of beers. Try a Durango Mule or Bloody Mary, or just take a look at those refreshing-looking Mason Jar Long Islands (\$7) there in the photo. That's a reward for any bike ride, which leads nicely

to my closing argument. Hope would like to add a specialty drink menu soon as well. Now we talked about where it was, but we didn't really talk about why that location is so special. It's unique because it's on the Heritage Trail, and in my book, the most beautiful stretch of the Heritage Trail. I believe it's also the only restaurant and bar stop on the whole trail. This is important because this place really is a destination. You don't really drive by on the way home from work, and if you do drive by, you're likely headed further

north. So when you go, it's because you want to go here specifically.

But when you're on your bike or on foot, it's even more of a magical spot. I can't more strongly suggest taking your friends or family on a bike ride on the Heritage Trail and making the Durango Depot your destination. If you park at the lot at Heritage Pond, it's a really flat, easy, and gorgeous bike ride on the Heritage Trail to Durango. You'll ride through a much-canopied, tree-lined route and over cool little bridges with no cars of any kind sharing your path. A 15- to 25-minute ride for most people. There's even a cool bridge over Catfish Creek right here at the Depot.

I like to ride from the Bee Branch parking Lot which adds about 3 miles to the ride each way. But you diehards (here's looking at you, Conner) can ride any of the 30 miles on the trail you like on your way there. You can even get your Heritage Trail passes right here at the bar! My point is, is that you don't need to be a big-time cyclist to ride there. Choose your distance, plan a ride to lunch or dinner, and then ride back to the car and burn off a little of that pizza. It's a great family afternoon outing you'll remember. And the food lives up to the effort you put in to get to it! And tell Hope *365ink* sent ya! ■



**Durango Depot**

**736 BURTONS FURNACE RD, DURANGO, IA 563-552-2291**

**FB:** @TheDurangoDepot

**Kitchen Hours:** Wed-Fri: 3-9 PM; Sat: Noon-9 PM; Sun: Noon-8 PM; Mon-Tue: Closed

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DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE RESTAURANT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE US VISIT? PLEASE SEND US YOUR REQUESTS, SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS! EMAIL: [DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM](mailto:DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM)

# Swiss Army Knife of Health

By Matt Booth

It's no secret we live in a primarily negative world, and living a basically incredible life takes a lot of energy. To manage our energy well, we need to rest well.

Sleep is the Swiss Army knife of health, and most people don't sleep well. Do you know how well you sleep? Do you know how much sleep you need to be at your best? Yes, eight hours is average, but everyone's sleep requirements and needs are different. We have to know how many hours our body requires to function optimally. I wear a smartwatch, which grades my sleep, and I've learned that a sleep score in the 80s is pretty good for me.

Why is sleep so important? When we sleep, our bodies repair themselves physically and mentally. Besides quitting drinking, smoking, or meth (haha), the most important thing you can do for your health is to get good sleep. Everyone says, "Oh yes, I agree. I know!" But very few people are actually doing this!

I've studied this for myself. I aim to average 7.5 hours of sleep each night, and I get a sleep score in the 80s. This is the right amount and quality of sleep for me to be at my best. Do you know what a good sleep score should be for you?

My grandpa had his first heart attack at 56 years old. I'll never forget how he slept in his maroon La-Z-Boy recliner, snoring so loudly it rocked the room. He'd stop breathing, then jolt awake. He had a second heart attack and passed away when he was 62. Sadly, I remember my uncle sleeping in that same La-Z-Boy chair and stopping breathing. He passed away at 56 years old. My dad would sleep in that same chair at Grandma's and shake the house with his snoring. I know what you're thinking. Get rid of that chair! All of them had sleep apnea. My dad had a sleep study, and he only struggles to breathe when he lies on his back. With a family history like this, you can see why this subject is so personal to me.

When I talk about sleep at a speaking engagement, someone usually stands up and shares a sleep apnea story. Getting tested for sleep apnea, especially if you're a male over 40, is one of the most crucial action items people take away from my talks because I'm that passionate about it. Rest is huge.

Recent statistics show that almost half of our nation isn't sleeping enough, and it's not hard to see how it's damaging our health and well-being. Can you imagine trying to be a positive person yet being sleep-deprived? We simply can't be at our best when we're not sleeping well. It's physically impossible. I challenge you to take the next 30 days and study your sleep. If you want to be a basically incredible person, make sure you are resting well! ■

"Too many people wear lack of sleep as a badge of honor. How can you expect to be your best when you're not getting enough sleep?" —Matt Booth, #1 Amazon Best Seller Book, *Basically Incredible*



**MATT BOOTH**

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"MATT IS FEATURED REGULARLY AS A SPEAKER IN OUR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM BECAUSE HE RELATES TO US AS PEOPLE STRIVING FOR POSITIVITY. HE HELPS US UNDERSTAND THAT 'BUSY' IS NO LONGER THE STANDARD JUDGMENT FOR OUR LIVES BUT RATHER THE NEED TO BE CONSISTENT IN VALUING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS. THROUGH STORIES AND ANECDOTES ON INTENTIONAL LIVING, MATT ENLIGHTENS US WITH HIS EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES US TO BE OUR BEST WHILE GIVING IDEAS ON HOW TO GET THERE. THIS BOOK IS A GEM!" —DON NORTON, CEO, SOUTH DAKOTA AGRICULTURAL & RURAL LEADERSHIP

