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SMASH BURGER

# The Hangry Hobo

By Bryce Parks

Hangry Hobo is the latest entry into the seemingly ever-growing Dubuque food truck pantheon, but they are by no means an also-ran. Right out of the gate, the food coming off of Nick Bries' grill at his dream career is legit and deserves your trust in giving them a try.

Not too long ago, Nick was a professional plumber. But getting older, he knew his back wasn't going to last much longer hunched over or digging holes. If there was a time to take the money he saved up and prepare for the next part of his life, now was the time. And despite a number of jobs from painter to construction, you don't see "chef" on that list of experience. But fear not, the training is there.

"Yeah, I was involved with my brother (Mike Bries) in many of his food ventures in the past. I always worked in the kitchen, doing prep work in the back. I worked at Barrel House for him. That's how I got to know Adam here that works with me. He also used to work for Birds [one of Dubuque's other completely amazing food trucks]."

There's a little bit of "if you know, you know" when Nick Bries mentions his brother Mike. Mike has served up some of the best food we've ever had in town at place's he's worked, owned, or managed. Places like Watershed Cafe (may it rest in peace), Athenian Grill (in its heyday), Michael Paul's, and more. Mike Bries knows great food, and through many of those culinary stops, his brother Nick

was right there with him working as a prep cook, learning the craft, and coming to appreciate delicious food creation.

Nick started from scratch in creating Hangry Hobo starting with the order of his custom-made trailer with eight-foot ceilings. It took approximately six weeks. Then the general contractors built it out including electric and, of course, his former boss, Minor Plumbing, did the plumbing.

"Jake, my old boss, actually helped me get this thing all together. And I had some good people help me out to get where I'm at."

So, when the truck was done and the name picked out, logo whipped up and the trailer was getting wrapped and make pretty for the people, the menu had to get finalized. You won't be surprised at all when I tell you that dialing in the best items to serve, he turned to none other than his brother Mike to help him decide.

"I really liked his turkey melt and the gyros, and I mean, he's always willing to help me out if I need help with anything or recipe or whatnot," noted Nick. "Smash burgers are a new big thing. So I decided to do that. People are loving mine which are part short rib."

"The taco was my idea. I'm a big taco guy, and so are my fiance and my kids. I used to love Taco Rio at the end of Rhomberg, and that's where I got the idea from with the deep fried taco."

Starting out, Nick has featured a lot of revolving specials, and he sees what people like the most, what works best, and what goes over consistently well.

"It's a floating menu right now, just until we get it dialed in and I see what sells. People love what we have already. So, I think the menu that I have out there today is gonna be my menu for a while."

So, what's on that menu? Well, what's usually on that menu. Those deep fried tacos he's talkin' about are served in a giant, fried, gyro pita shell, and they are delicious. I can attest to

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GYRO

that. But he might have to serve it with a fork... and a handful of napkins.

Of course, this means that he also has an excellent gyro with all the traditional fixings.

The smash burger comes with your choice of provolone, cheddar, swiss, or pepper jack cheese.

Brother Mike's famous turkey melt lives on at Hangry Hobo. Or maybe a chicken bacon ranch wrap. Or, oooh... a Hobo Melt with ribeye steak, cheddar, and swiss. Or simplify (sort of) with a Hank Ren Grilled Cheese with cheddar, swiss, bacon, and tomato.

Everything comes with a generous serving of fresh, crispy french fries.

And you can even get some starters to kick things off with mini tacos or Hobo Poppers.

On our first visit, we had the smash burger, and it's the real deal. No frozen patty here. Fresh burger with that short rib we mentioned ground right in there and fixed on the flat top with a good ol' smash to get a crisp edge on it.

It was all fresh tasting, juicy, flavorful, and filling. We're not sure you need a starter to fill you up, but who am I to crush your dreams?

We think and hope that he'll add the convenience of beverages to his offering line up, and a lot of these items could be well served by a knife and fork and ketchup packets. So, I'll bet that all happens as well.

Just weeks in, Bries could not be happier with how things are going.

"Everything's going great. So, I couldn't be happier. I get choked up saying it." Clearly, this labor of love for Nick is far more than just a job. He has put his everything into this, and so much life experience and skill has finally culminated in something that is truly his, from the ground up.

"Something about it. I've done a lot of things over the years. You know, I always made money, but I didn't make it from the ground up."

Already Nick is finding some consistent spots that are winners so people can get used to knowing where to find him. And even those spots are kind of in family locations.

"That's why I consistently set up at TownePlace Suites down at 1151 Washington St. I used to be the chief engineer of maintenance down there. And I set up regularly at Journey Church [3939 Pennsylvania Ave]. It's my church, and I plan to operate right through the winter, too.

"We are also going to start booking some dinners starting in September. If anyone would like to book something, feel free to message us through Facebook Messenger."

So, get your food hanger up and track down the big green trailer! And tell 'em *365ink* sent ya! ■



**The Hangry Hobo**

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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!  
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