



MISSISSIPPI POT ROAST SANDWICH WITH COUNTRY POTATOES



CREAM OF MUSHROOM WITH SAUSAGE SOUP

Birdie's Bistro

By Danny Fairchild

I think it's probably true that most people have a "Birdie" in their family, if not in name then certainly in spirit. "Birdie" is a cutesy nickname for Beatrice, Elizabeth, Bridget, and Bertha, so it spans many grandma names. I know I have a Birdie somewhere, though I'm having trouble remembering whereabouts she appears on my family tree. "Birdie" is kind of the relic saint of your family's culinary history. If you have a family biscuit recipe, it's probably Birdie's. If you have a sourdough yeast starter, Birdie probably started it. That Jell-O salad your mom would break out at potlucks? Birdie's recipe. Not one of her best.

Anyway, if you understand the concept of Birdie as an archetype, then you understand the concept of Birdie's Bistro. And you're going to love it.

Birdie's Bistro is now my favorite Texas toast diner. "Texas toast diner" is a term I just coined, feel free to spread it around. But you know what I mean,

right? Hearty food where Texas toast isn't the ONLY bread option, but it's kind of the default. The kind of place that only serves breakfast and lunch because the sun doesn't always shine during that time. You get it, right? Okay, now take that but make the food actually memorable. Oh! Did I just pinch your nipple?

Don't get me wrong, Texas toast diners almost always have food that's good. But it's not that memorable. I'm trying to think of a dish that sticks out as memorable from a Texas toast diner. I know I've had many a good meal at such places. I mean, duh. But right now, other than the newfound eats at Birdie's Bistro, the only dish that sticks out in my memory are the french fries with sausage gravy from a truck stop in my hometown. I'm going to remember Birdie's.

Here's what I'm going to remember: The Mississippi Pot Roast Sandwich. This thing of beauty scratches so many itches. Got an itch for an Italian beef? With a slow roast of beef infused with savory herbs, au jus, butter, and pepperoncini, this thing is almost an Italian beef on sourdough. Craving a hot beef sandwich? This thing eats like a hot beef sandwich, but 'cept without the mashed potatoes and gravy. It's a wet sandwich to be sure, but get this: I took mine home and threw it in the fridge for a few days. It was soooo

close to becoming one of the many leftovers I never got around to. But I rolled the dice on it and damned if structural integrity was still pretty tight. Apparently their sourdough is a miraculous sandwich building material. You guys caught that "butter" is part of the pot roast recipe, right? Not sure if that's totally why this sandwich is so good, but it sure as hell can't possibly hurt.

I'll also remember the Cream of Mushroom with Sausage soup. Which was the soup of the day on our adventure. It's because I kind of filled up on this soup and the accompanying Texas toast that I had sandwich leftovers to begin with. I suspect that the preparation of this soup is just a continuation of the prep for their sausage gravy (more on that later), but that's just fine. Kind of brilliant, honestly. The mushrooms are legibly sliced mushrooms. I love mushrooms so much, you guys. And I love mushroom soup, too. Most people buy condensed cream of mushroom soup only to put in their casseroles. I do that too. Or I would if I didn't just keep eating it as soup. Just had a can for lunch yesterday, in fact. So the bar is set kind of low for me for cream of mushroom soup. You have me at "mushroom" no matter what. But then you make it absolutely dense with mushrooms and then have the courage to also be about sausage?

How many of my favorite things can you fit in a dish? Note: Mushrooms take up at least two slots in my top five favorite things. You know what? I'm calling BS on this soup. This isn't a mushroom with sausage soup. This is a mushroom with sausage chowder. Boom. Now go eat it.

I'll also fondly remember the Chicken and Biscuits. I know, I know. Chicken and waffles are kind of the hip thing these days. Look, I don't know what YOUR family "Birdie" was like, but I'd reckon she didn't often mess with a waffle iron. Not when you can prepare such good biscuits. We're talking two pull-apartable biscuits with housemade sausage gravy and topped with hand-breaded chicken. Turns out you CAN fit a few more of my favorite things in a dish. You know how sometimes a restaurant claims to hand-bread their chicken but then you look at it and you've never been more sure of anything in your life that this chicken came off the Sysco truck pre-breaded? No? Just me? Then don't worry about it. You certainly don't have to worry about it at Birdie's. Look, our respective Birdies weren't above a shortcut when it came to cooking for all those sons and daughters (YOUR aunts and uncles) but she'd never do that for guests. And you're a guest here. Prepare to be treated warmly like one.



CHICKEN AND BISCUITS

I'll remember the country potatoes. And I'll never forget them. I used to think that some culinary experiences were universal. For example: No matter how good coffee tastes, and it tastes amazing, it will always SMELL better than it tastes. Or that no matter how good country potatoes (also doing business as: home fries and American fries) are, they'll never be as good as french fries. My friends, I was wrong. The country potatoes at Birdie's taste better than most french fries I've had. I didn't get a chance to try their french fries, but the only way the universe will make sense again is if Birdie's french fries are even better than their country potatoes. They highly recommend their country potatoes, and you'd do the right thing by listening to them.

The bathrooms. So clean, you guys. Remember, this location has housed several restaurants over the years. Most restaurants like to start with an immaculate bathroom. So I'm guessing this bathroom hasn't been anywhere near sketchy for decades, if ever. Pee and poo freely.

In short, Birdie's is my favorite place for breakfast, and I'm certainly throwing it in the rotation for lunch. I've loved the food at every restaurant that has inhabited this location, and Birdie's continues the tradition and builds on it. You're going to love it. ■



Birdie's Bistro
 1220 IOWA ST, DUBUQUE, IA
 563-213-5583
 BIRDIESBISTRODBQ.COM
 Hours: Wed-Sun: 7 AM-2 PM;
 Mon-Tue: Closed

DANNY FAIRCHILD

DANNY DOESN'T TAKE CRAP FROM NOBODY, BUT HE'LL TAKE FOOD FROM ALMOST ANYBODY. IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT DANNY, OR FEED HIM NOM-NOMS, EMAIL HIM AT DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM.



KID CHEFS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5 @ 4 PM

For ages 9-14. Calling all kids who have an interest in cooking, food, and learning to help make meals at home. We will walk you through kitchen skills and teach you how to make yummy recipes. **Registration required. Please sign up for this free program at carnegiestout.org/events or call 563-589-4225, ext. 2228.**



**UKULELE TIME!
 ADULT UKULELE LESSONS**

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 10 @ 6 PM

Join librarian Ben to work on chords, exercises, and songs all geared toward beginners. If you are brand new to the ukulele, consider arriving early for help tuning your instrument. Participants are encouraged to bring their own ukulele or check one out from the library. A limited number of ukuleles will be available at the program on a first come, first served basis. **Registration is required. Please sign up for this free program at carnegiestout.org/events or call 563-589-4225, ext. 2224.**

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