



PHOTO: DYERSVILLE FAMILY RESTAURANT

TACO PANCAKES



BACON CHEESEBURGER



ALASKAN WAFFLE

Dyersville Family Restaurant

Story and Photos by Danny Fairchild

I've written quite a bit about supper clubs in past issues, but I'd like to turn your attention to another kind of restaurant that has largely been unsung. I'm talking about eateries known as family restaurants. I'm not talking about restaurants that serve their food family-style where

everyone eats the same thing. I'm talking about restaurants with food options so varied and so good (or at least good enough) that everybody in the family will be happy. Little Chris can get their chicky fingers. Mom can get a huge taco salad. Dad can get the pork T. And the whole family can melt in their shoes with just three little words: ALL DAY BREAKFAST.

Family restaurants aim to make the whole family satisfied. Dyersville Family Restaurant, however, isn't satisfied with just satisfied. They want their food to make the whole family HAPPY. And I'm here to tell you: I'm smilin'.

I first came across DFR one morning when I was solo antiquing. I got into town before the stores opened, so I stopped in for breakfast because a plate of biscuits and gravy is a delicious way to spend some time. More on the biscuits and gravy later, but suffice it to say they made a great impression on me. The second time I came across DFR was while I was performing a murder mystery in Dyersville. One of the guests mentioned it, and I was reminded of those biskies and gravy and how much I liked it there and how someone should really write a column on Dyersville Family Restaurant for *365ink*. And so here we are.

The vibe? Dyersville Family Restaurant serves good food and looks good doing it. It starts with the charming downtown Dyersville setting. You've probably experienced it. Cute, right? Then inside, DFR is kind of this... I don't know... it's kind of a hip-to-be-square feel. It's kinda stylishly cool, but not too cool for you or anybody. The servers who have helped me have been engaging and courteous with a folksy kind of awkwardness I can relate to... but they've also had

really cool tattoos to show a little edge, you know? There's neon on the walls, but it's not obnoxiously lit up by neon.

On to the food, yo.

Let me get back to those biscuits and gravy that made me fall in love with Dyersville Family Restaurant. Who doesn't love biscuits and gravy? Besides vegans. And vegetarians too, come to think of it. And people who keep kosher. And people with heart disease. And people with gluten sensitivities. And people who are lactose intolerant. Point is, everyone who CAN love biscuits and gravy typically DO love biscuits and gravy. Okay, now look at that picture. Can you see biscuits in that picture? No, you cannot. Because they're under all that sausage gravy. I know because I looked and found them there. Dyersville Family Restaurant ain't stingy with the gravy, is what I'm saying. But under all that gravy, the biscuits weren't bound for soggytown. They still had that Maillard reaction crispness on the outside with that flaky fluffiness within. And there's enough sausage involved to get that sage-forward yumminess throughout. Top-shelf biscuits and gravy, yo.

I can't remember what I ordered that came with soup as a side option, but the soup of the day was vegetable beef. Now folks, are you like me? Are you just not able to muster ANY enthusiasm whatsoever for vegetable beef soup? It's like... why can't it just be beef stew? You have the beef. You have the vegetables. Why would you EVER choose to make vegetable beef soup over beef stew? That's a decision that people and businesses make on a regular basis, and it's baffling to me. If I wasn't interested in trying DFR's soup for you all, I wouldn't have even bothered. But look at that soup, yo. That's homemade



BISCUITS & GRAVY

for sure. If you can't tell it's housemade just by looking at it, rest assured that you can tell it's housemade when you taste it. It's hands down the best vegetable beef soup I've ever had. Dyersville Family Restaurant has made me excited for vegetable beef soup. I would have thought that impossible, but here we are. If they can do that with a soup you could take or leave, imagine what they could do with a soup you actually care about.

I wanted to try a burger for you all, and while you CAN get a more specialized burger like the Philly Cheeseburger, I kept it basic with a bacon cheeseburger. I must warn you: I did see the double cheeseburger on the menu and considered getting it. But holy cow, the one patty that came on the bacon cheeseburger was big enough to eat like a double cheeseburger. I'm a big guy, and I don't know how I would handle two of those patties. Feel free to accept that challenge. The patty itself was perfectly done, which is to say it is done but not overdone. I like a little pink in my burger if it's allowed, but I didn't miss the pinkness here. Perfectly prepped and seasoned with the bacon fused to the patty with cheese so it doesn't wander and evade your bite as you eat it. Awesome.

Honorable mention to DFR's taco pancakes. They were mentioned to me by my server as a, "Oh, jeez! I forgot! I SHOULD have recommended the taco pancakes!" once I couldn't eat much more. So, I haven't tried them. But I did yank a picture of them from DFR's socials. Look at 'em. Yes... they SHOULD have recommended them to me. These aren't regular menu items, but they are frequent specials, so keep your eyes open.

That's not to say what WAS recommended to me was a mistake. Not at all. Opposites. I'm talking about the Alaskan Waffle. Yeah, it's on the breakfast menu, but look at it. That was a helluva dessert. Let me tell you about the family restaurant my own family frequented when I was but a lad. It was at a truck stop called Ampride in my hometown of Denison, IA. It was



VEGETABLE BEEF SOUP

open 24 hours, so many late nights were spent there with friends in my teenage years, but when I was younger it was the first place I'd ever (to my memory) had a Belgian waffle. And it became what I ordered at Ampride from then on. The waffles I got at Ampride never came with a huge scoop of ice cream on top like the Alaskan Waffle at DFR, pictured. No way would my parents have let me order that as my meal. But somehow DFR has managed to make a waffle that not only starkly and fondly brings back that memory of my first ever Belgian waffle, but it makes that memory even more sweet. Because of the whole ice cream thing, you see. Seriously. For the sweetest of moments I was once again nine years old, sitting across from my late parents while I'm pouring on the syrup and my parents are remarking on the size of the taco salad one more time.

That's one powerful waffle. Thank you, Dyersville Family Restaurant. ■

Dyersville Family Restaurant

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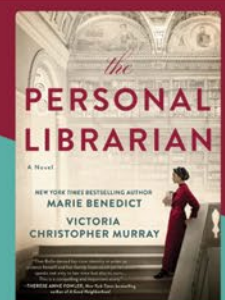
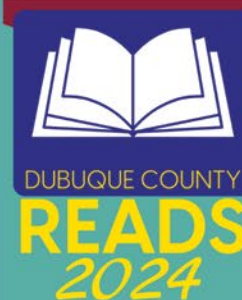


Color Science

THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 4 P.M.

For ages 5 to 7. Conduct science experiments that fizz, change colors, and light up! Bring a favorite grown-up to be your lab assistant. Materials provided.

Registration required. Sign up at carnegiestout.org/events.



READING ROUNDTABLE BOOK DISCUSSION:

"The Personal Librarian"

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 6 P.M.

Please join us to talk about "The Personal Librarian" by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray at the April Reading Roundtable Book Discussion. This book is the selected title for the 2024 Dubuque County Reads program. **No registration required.**

Learn more about Dubuque County Reads at libguides.dbq.edu/dubuquecountyreads.

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