



Benvenuto's Italian Grill

by Rich Belmont

Benvenuto is Italian for Welcome! This is a very appropriate name for Benvenuto's Italian Grill because as soon as you walk in the door you are made to feel very welcome. The hostesses, bartenders and servers are all so friendly and accommodating they make you feel right at home.



Benvenuto's Italian Grill is a Wisconsin restaurant chain. It was started by Brian Dominick who opened his first store in Beaver Dam in 1996. There are now 4 company stores and 2 franchise operations. The first franchise is in Middleton and now, lucky for us, the second franchise opened in Platteville on June 18, 2013. Benvenuto's serves lunch and dinner and has something for everyone including burgers, salads, pasta, calzones, wood-fired pizzas, entrée salads, steaks and seafood. The food is plentiful and reasonably priced in keeping with their philosophy of offering great food for a great value!

Benvenuto's Platteville is owned by a group of local private investors. Two of those investors are Al and Julie Klein. Julie is the owner/operator and runs the restaurant. She is experienced in customer service and hospitality management from her years at the Governor Dodge Hotel and Convention Center. She obviously knows what she is doing since her restaurant is already serving consistently good meals and her staff of 77 employees are all functioning as if they have been there for years. OK, this is a chain restaurant but this store has only been open for two months!



Compliments go out to the Head Chef as well. Chef Bob Slater (Pictured above with Julie Klein) has been cooking for 35 years. He was a chef for Schwartz Brothers Restaurants in Seattle, WA. Two of those restaurants: Daniel's Broiler in Bellevue, WA, a prime steakhouse, and Spazzo Italian Grill & Wine Bar in Redmond, WA were tremendous learning centers for Chef Bob. In those establishments he sharpened his skills he now uses in running the kitchen of an Italian Grill and Steakhouse! He and his Sous Chef, Tim Stohlmeyer, control a large kitchen crew responsible for a rather extensive menu. A wide variety of Italian specialties, pizzas, steaks and seafood are all made from scratch with fresh ingredients.



Many of the appetizers are impressive. The Sampler Platter is a huge plate filled with cheese bread, fried mozzarella sticks, crispy chicken tenders and an onion haystack served with a variety of dipping sauces. The Scallop Stuffed Mushrooms are simply wonderful (left). White mushrooms caps are stuffed with fresh scallops and garlic butter then wrapped in bacon and topped with a baked parmesan crust. Bryce Parks, the 365ink publisher, just loves these. But in the spirit of full disclosure I must say I'm pretty sure he loves anything wrapped in bacon!



I, myself cannot stop eating the Italian Nachos appetizer. Lasagna pasta sheets are cut into nacho chips and deep fried. Then they



are topped with a 5 cheese Alfredo sauce, plus mozzarella, pepperoni, Italian sausage, tomatoes and banana peppers. This combination of ingredients sounds peculiar but the resulting flavor is spectacular.



During a couple of recent visits our talented and knowledgeable server, Chelsea Stratton, helped us pick out some of the popular entrées. She explained we could choose to order from the regular menu or the separate Features Menu that changes about every 3 months. I had a Meatball Sandwich (left) as good as my Aunt Anna's. The meatballs are made fresh from a mixture of veal, beef, pork sausage, bread crumbs, egg, onions, roasted garlic, fresh basil and parsley.

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1621 Progressive Parkway, Platteville, WI 53818
608-348-5000 www.Benvenutos.com
www.Facebook.com/PlattevilleBenvenutos

HOURS: Lunch: 7 days, 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Dinner 4 p.m.)

Bar: Fri & Sat, 11 a.m. – 11 p.m.

DINING STYLE: Casual **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational

RECOMMENDATIONS: French Dip, Meatball Sub, Shrimp Tetraxini, Scallop Stuffed Mushrooms, Italian Nachos, Wood-Fired Pizza, Chicken Piccata, Veal Parmigiana, Grilled Salmon, Steak Flight, Pasta Trio, Roasted Garlic Shrimp Fettuccine, Ribeye, Prime Rib

LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, 23 oz. Domestic Tap Beers

Half price appetizers 3 to 6 pm

PRICE RANGE: Lunch: \$7.59 - \$12.59, Dinner: \$8.29 - \$21.99

PAYMENT: Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards, NO Checks

ACCESSIBILITY: Front Door & Restrooms

KIDS POLICY: Menu: Little Kids 10 & under, Big Kids 13 & under High Chairs, Boosters, Infant Carrier Stands

RESERVATIONS: Call ahead to be next on waiting list

CATERING: Yes **TAKE OUT:** Yes

DELIVERY: Yes to businesses in Platteville

PARKING: Large private lot



Margie chose the Chicken Piccata from the Features Menu (above). A lightly floured chicken breast is sautéed in lemon butter, white wine and capers and served on a bed of Capellini (angel hair) pasta. I asked her for a bite and I must admit I ate half of her whole dinner! I'm going back next week to get a full serving for myself! Another feature is Caprese Chicken Pasta. Caprese means in the style of Capri, an Italian island off the coast of Naples, and usually signals your dinner will include fresh tomato, basil and mozzarella. True enough, this dish came with grape tomatoes, olive oil, basil, mozzarella and a balsamic vinegar reduction over penne pasta.



Another splendid dish is the Shrimp (or chicken) Tetraxini. (above) There are many versions of Tetraxini and Benvenuto's includes a generous portion of large size shrimp tossed with spaghetti in a white wine butter cream and parmesan sauce (Alfredo) then baked with a five cheese blend and an herb crust topping. By the way, I'll bet you didn't know Tetraxini is an American specialty originating around the early 1900's in either New York City or San Francisco. It was named after Luisa Tetraxini a famous Italian opera singer who lived in San Francisco.

If you read my columns regularly you know I am Italian and no self-respecting Italian would go to an Italian restaurant without sampling the pizza. Here they hand stretch the crust and bake



them in a stone hearth gas oven, enhanced with burning wood in order to impart terrific smoky flavor. I have had two pizzas so far: the Margherita made with fresh mozzarella, basil, sliced tomatoes and roasted garlic on an olive oil brushed crust.

The other one was a scrumptious Benvenuto loaded with pepperoni, ham, Italian sausage, mushrooms, onions, black olives, bell peppers and five cheeses. You can order a specialty pizza or build your own from a staggering list of 31 toppings.

When you are studying the menu you might notice many of the entrées contain five cheeses or a five cheese blend. Just so you know these 5 cheeses are mozzarella, provolone, Asiago, parmesan and Romano.



Since Platteville does not have a proper steakhouse Benvenuto's menu includes many steak options. All these steaks are hand trimmed and aged and charred on an open flame grill. Enjoy a savory Sirloin, Ribeye, Tenderloin, New York Strip or Pork Ribeye. A splendid Prime Rib is served on Friday and Saturday nights. If you would like to try some unusual flavors on your steak order the Steak Flight (above). This dish has 3 sirloin strips each served with a different topping: truffle béarnaise, mushroom demi-glace and Jack Daniel's BBQ sauce.

Benvenuto's has you covered when you feel like seafood too. Fried Haddock, Fried Jumbo Shrimp, Smothered Haddock and fresh-never-frozen Salmon are on the menu. A recent fish dish was a Norwegian Salmon Filet covered with a coffee flavored rub (above).

There is always something going on at Benvenuto's. Visit between 3 and 6 pm for half price appetizers in the bar. On Wednesdays you can play What-Am-I-Wednesday. A menu description is posted on Facebook and the 1st person to identify the menu item and call it in gets a gift card for the price of the mystery item. I recommend you join Benvenuto's E-Club to receive specials in your e-mail. For example, this week there is a free beverage with any sandwich deal.

Since you will be going to this place often you should also join Benvenuto's Customer Rewards Club to earn points towards appetizers, drinks and desserts.

There is an outdoor dining area, a private party dining section for up to 50 people, a Gluten-Free menu and a Group Pricing To-Go menu.



Of course a great dinner requires a great dessert! There are nine decadent choices including Peanut Butter Pie, Salted Caramel Cheesecake (above), Flourless Chocolate Cake and my two all-time favorites: Tiramisu (above), espresso soaked lady fingers covered with creamy mascarpone cheese and Mocha Cannoli, two chocolate dipped cannoli shells filled with mocha cappuccino infused ricotta cream and chocolate chips.

If you live around Platteville I'm sure you already know where Benvenuto's Italian Grill is. If you are coming from Dubuque the route is simple. From the Dubuque Wisconsin Bridge take Route 151 North 21 miles to exit 21. Go left on route 151 Business and turn right at Wal-Mart and left onto Progressive Parkway.

Buon Appetito! That's Italian for Good Appetite!