



BRAZEN OPEN KITCHEN|BAR

BY RICH BELMONT



Dubuque's Millwork District just keeps getting better all the time. Adding to the excitement is Brazen open kitchen|bar. This casual fine dining restaurant opened February 10, 2015 at the corner of Washington and 10th

Streets in Dubuque. It is located in a former millwork factory built between 1880 and 1906. That factory was part of a company started in 1856 that changed names several times and in 1938 was known as Carr, Adams and Collier Company (CARADCO). It manufactured over thirty million doors and fifty-five million windows. CARADCO products were used in the White House, West Point Military Academy, Northwestern University and the University of Iowa. (Source: Encyclopedia Dubuque)

Gronen Restoration painstakingly transformed the building into the beautiful edifice it is today. The upper floors are called CARADCO Lofts and contain 72 modern one and two bedroom apartments.

Brazen is on the main floor which is part of what is now recognized as the Schmid Innovation Center. This is a mixed-use anchor property for the Millwork District Revitalization Project. Key infrastructure improvements to the building were made possible through the generous funding provided by Dick Schmid, Senior Vice President, Crescent Electric Supply Company and his wife Carrie and family.

Brazen open kitchen|bar is in a very old building but it is surprisingly modern with a clean, youthful vibe. It is a place you go to savor professionally prepared New American cuisine you normally only see on The Food Network.

The name Brazen was chosen by its owners because it means audacious, bold, daring and fearless. They are doing whatever it takes to provide world inspired cuisine to their patrons who usually have to travel to bigger cities to experience. An open kitchen was installed so you can observe professionals preparing food from recipes originating all over the world just like those celebrity chefs on television. Only here you get to enjoy culinary masterpieces created just for you.

Kevin Scharpf is Co-Owner and Executive Chef. He is a native of Galena, IL and although he is only 28 years old he has worked in restaurants for 14 years. He started his career as a Line Cook at Woodlands Restaurant, Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa in Galena. It was there he discovered his passion for cooking and his desire to be a chef. So he enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts, Mendota Heights, MN where he received an Associate's Degree in Culinary Arts.

While going to school he worked full time in the fine dining restaurant La Fougasse (foo-gahs) in the Hotel Sofitel (sew-fi-tel) in Minneapolis. Fun Fact: Fougasse simply means the French version of Italy's focaccia bread. La Fougasse is now closed but it was once considered the finest French restaurant in Minneapolis. The night I dined there the Vikings Football Team was in the private party room.



After graduation Kevin was chosen to be a Chef de Partie (line cook) at Restaurant Daniel. This prestigious French restaurant is in Manhattan's Upper East Side (East 65th Street). It is owned by famous restaurateur and Chef Daniel Boulud. It is a Michelin 2

Star, New York Times 4 Star and winner of a James Beard Outstanding Restaurant Award. It is also a member of Relais & Châteaux (re-Lay de shah-toh) a global fellowship of individually owned and operated luxury hotels and restaurants. Daniel was just named Number One Restaurant in The Daily Meal's 101 Best Restaurants in America for 2015 (**TheDailyMeal.com**)

Kevin trained under the renowned Executive Chef Jean Francois Bruel and Chef de Cuisine Eddy Leroux.

Kevin then returned to Galena to marry his high school sweetheart, Lyndsi and for a while was Executive Chef at the Captain Merry in East Dubuque, IL. He then became Executive Sous Chef at the Diamond Jo Casino in Dubuque. He is the winner of the First Place Chef Par Excellence Award in the Iowa Pork Producers Association 2014 Taste of Excellence 28th Annual Culinary Contest. He was then able to participate in the 2014 National Pork Summit in Napa Valley, CA.

Chef Kevin's passion and enthusiasm is infectious and his creative culinary skills are exemplary. Besides Lyndsi, nobody knows this better than his co-owner and business partner, Dubuque native, Kim McDermott. Kim was Director of Finance

at the Diamond Jo Casino and is now the VP, Finance and Administration of Eagle Point Solar.

Kyle Bessert is Chef de Cuisine. He is from Green Bay, WI. He started as a dishwasher at the Diamond Jo Casino. His cooking skills were acknowledged early on and he quickly progressed through the ranks to Sous Chef in the Woodfire Grill.

Brazen is a scratch kitchen. This means almost everything is made in-house. Only whole fish and poultry are purchased. Pastas, marinades, sauces and condiments are all prepared from fresh ingredients. The bread and desserts are baked on the premises. When you first sit down just- baked bread is brought to your table. It's made according to a very old rustic recipe.



The Butternut Squash Soup has a dollop of Cranberry Walnut Pesto. It is a basil pesto made with walnuts, dried cranberries, garlic and olive oil. The soup is sprinkled with Pecorino Cheese (pec-o-REE-no). Pecorino refers

to all Italian cheeses made from sheep's milk. There are now 5 varieties of Pecorino. They are Pecorino Romano, Sardo, Siciliano, Toscano and Pecorino di Filiano. Pecorino Romano is the one best known in the US and is the one used here.

The soup is served with Crostini (kraw-stee-nee) made from sourdough bread. Crostini is Italian for "little toasts" and simply means the bread is thin sliced and toasted.

The Roasted Brussels Sprouts are a combination of unusual flavors. They are prepared with an apple purée made from salsify, milk, apples, sweet onions and garlic. Did you ever hear of salsify? Yeah, me neither. It is a white root much like a parsnip but thinner. It is really good when steamed, sautéed or browned in butter.

You will notice several menu items include Dunbarton Blue Cheese. This is a product of Chris Roelli of Roelli Cheese Haus in Shullsburg, WI. It is not a traditional blue cheese and only has a very subtle hint of blue flavor. Chris spikes classic English-style Cheddar with Penicillium Roqueforti. Once the mold begins to flourish the cheese is pressed to stop the mold growth. Even if you don't like blue cheese I bet you will love this cheese.

The Brussels Sprouts are then finished with a Cider Gastrique (gas-treek). This is a French sweet and sour sauce of caramelized sugar deglazed with vinegar. Chef Kevin uses apple vinegar and adds a little cinnamon, crushed red pepper and cloves.

I really enjoy the Fried Arancini (a-ran-CHEE-nee). These stuffed rice balls are coated with breadcrumbs and fried. They are said to have originated in Sicily in the 10th century. Traditionally they contain a meat sauce, mozzarella and peas. In this version they are only stuffed with fresh mozzarella. This makes it one of the many menu options available for you vegetarians.



The Crab Cakes are made from very expensive pure 100% lump crab meat and they are excellent. I also enjoyed the Fried Eggplant immensely. It is sliced very thin, battered in egg, rolled and stuffed with stewed tomatoes and smoked mozzarella.



The most popular item on the menu is Duck Tacos. Some of my friends can't stop raving about them. Leg and thigh duck meat is cooked in an olive oil, citrus, cinnamon confit for 12 hours and stuffed into corn tortilla shells.

Brazen isn't an Italian restaurant but nevertheless the pastas are splendid. For example the Tagliatelle (tah-lyah-TEHL-leh) is typically an egg yolk noodle between 3/8 to 1/4 inch wide. Since Chef Kevin makes his own he chooses to cut them up to 2 inches wide just to show off. They are lightly coated with an outstanding Bolognese (meat) sauce.

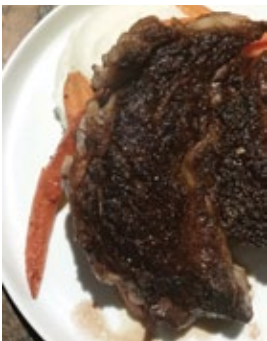
The Pizzas are surprisingly good. The crust is covered with a homemade pizza sauce and fresh mozzarella. You have a choice of short rib, sausage or my favorite: tomato, mozzarella and basil which is after all the traditional Margherita.



The Pork Chop is first class and I love it. Chef Kevin buys his pork from Berkwood Farms in Des Moines, IA. This supplier provides 100% Berkshire Pork. Since pigs take on the flavor of what they eat

these pigs are fed a grain-based vegetarian diet. Chef Kevin cold-smokes this meat in hay oats to bring out its exquisite taste.

The Beef Ribeye is 20 ounces of 60 day dry aged juicy, heavily marbled beef. It is served with mashed potatoes, locally grown carrots and fresh, tender, bitter greens. These delicate greens are from a local grower: Laura Klavitter, a horticulturalist who operates Top Shelf Micro Greens. The greens served at Brazen's are currently either arugula or watercress.



Margie thoroughly enjoyed the Alaska Halibut. It is brined in-house and served with a Black Garlic Sauce. The garlic is heated over several weeks until the cloves turn black. The taste is sweet yet hints of balsamic vinegar. Black Garlic is available from the Dubuque Food Co-Op. Bryce Parks, the 365ink publisher, is a big fan of the Prime Burger. It is an 8 ounce patty made from a mix of ground chuck, short rib and brisket. It is served on a Brioche (egg) bun supplied by East Mill Bakeshop and comes slathered in an onion jam.



Nick and Kristina of my Tasting Team, proclaimed the Fried Chicken to be exceptional. Brined chicken parts are hand coated with a homemade egg white and flour batter. They are accompanied by a Bean Cassoulet (kas-oh-lay). This version of French bean casserole

contains house -cured bacon, white wine, chicken stock, northern beans, butter beans and homemade stewed tomatoes.



The Flat Iron Steak is tender and derives much of its flavor from a wonderful Romesco: a Spanish nut and red pepper based sauce. Brazen's Romesco is made with a mixture of almonds, walnuts, roasted red bell peppers, poblano peppers and olive oil.

Brazen open kitchen|bar brings state-of-the-art Midwestern haute cuisine to Dubuque. So it would be a shame to pass up desserts! The current offerings are Crème Brûlée, Cinnamon Donuts with a chocolate sauce, and my new favorite: Chocolate Pot de Crème (poh-due-KREHM). This decadent chocolate cream is topped with salted caramel and you will definitely want one all to yourself! Buon Appetito my friends!

BRAZEN OPEN KITCHEN|BAR

955 Washington Street, Dubuque, IA 52001
563-587-8899 • BrazenOpenKitchen.com
Facebook.com/BrazenOpenKitchen

Bar Hours: Tue–Sat: 4:30 PM–Close; Sun–Mon: Closed

Kitchen Hours: Tue–Thu: 4:30 PM–9 PM; Fri–Sat: 4:30 PM–10 PM; Sun–Mon: Closed

Dining Style: Casual Fine Dining • **Noise Level:** Comfortable

Recommendations: Fried Arancini; Jumbo Lump Crab Cake; Fried Eggplant; Duck Taco; Brussels Sprouts; Caesar Salad; Tagliatelle Pasta; Crust with Tomato, Mozzarella, Pesto; Pork Chop; Ribeye; Flat Iron Steak; Fried Chicken; Salmon; Halibut; Pot de Crème

Liquor Service: Full Bar, Margarita, Manhattan, Bloody Mary

Prices: \$12–\$36 • **Pay Options:** Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards except AMEX, NO Checks, ATM in building

Accessibility: Front and Back Door Ramps, Restrooms

Kids Policy: Ask Server for Menu Choice,

Boosters: Yes, High Chair: No

Reservations: Highly Recommended

Catering: Yes • **Take Out:** Yes • **Delivery:** No

Parking: On Street—Washington, 9th and 10th Streets