



Catfish Charlie's on the River

1630 East 16th Street, Dubuque, IA 52001
563-582-8600 www.CatfishCharliesDubuque.com
HOURS: Monday – Thursday 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.,
Friday – Saturday, 11 a.m. – 10 p.m., Sunday, 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.
DINING STYLE: Casual, **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational
RECOMMENDATIONS: Onion Rings, Alligator Nuggets, Crab Cakes, Clam Chowder, Fish Sandwich, Charlie's Catfish, Reuben, Imperial Haddock, Fried Shrimp, Smoked Rib Combos, Bourbon Salmon, Fish & Chips, King Crab Legs, Twin lobster Tails, Top Sirloin and Ribeye Steaks
LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, Twelve Bloody Marys, Handcrafted Beers
PRICE RANGE: Lunch: \$8.99 - \$14.99, Dinner: \$9.99 - \$42.99
RESERVATIONS: Oct. 1st - Mar. 31 only. Call ahead list for Spring & Summer
PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, All Major Credit Cards, No Checks
WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Ramp to Front Door & Ramp to Deck
KIDS POLICY: Children's Menu, High Chairs & Boosters
CATERING: Yes, **TAKE OUT:** Yes, **DELIVERY:** No
PARKING: Large Private Lot & Private Boat Docks



Catfish Charlie's on the River

by Rich Belmont



Charlie Cretsinger, Proprietor of Catfish Charlie's On the River, had a goal in mind when in 2005 he built his restaurant and developed his dockage in the Dubuque Yacht Basin. He knew the city needed a good seafood restaurant and boaters needed a place where they could park their watercraft and go have a nice lunch or dinner.

So Charlie created a beautiful environment where people have a view of the Mississippi River and boat docks from every table.



He installed seafood experts in the kitchen and found suppliers that would allow him to serve fresh fish, shellfish, steaks and ribs at reasonable prices.

There was never any doubt Charlie would establish a marina fine dining restaurant. After all, he has been involved in the hospitality business for the last 32 years. He grew up on a farm in Coon Rapids, IA and began tending bar at a young age. He moved to Scottsdale and became a cook at Stooges Sports Pub. Then he cooked at Jobbers Canyon in Omaha, finally moving to Dubuque in 1991. He then became a Managing Partner in a restaurant development company. It is now several years later and Charlie has built seven restaurants from the ground up.



First and foremost Catfish Charlie's is a place to have fun. There is a full bar in its own room where you can try twelve different Bloody Mary drinks. There is also a collection of handcrafted beers. The Bikini Deck is a good place to enjoy the sunny autumn days.

And now would be a good time to book a cruise on their American Lady yacht to see the autumn colors. The boat will run through October and possibly part of November, weather permitting. (563-557-9700 or www.AmericanLadyCruises.com)



Now before I describe the wonderful cuisine I must tell you an interesting story about Executive Chef Steve Neece. Steve started his culinary career as a dishwasher working in



one of Charlie's previous restaurants. He was so inspired by Charlie he enrolled at the Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago, an affiliate of Le Cordon Blue. After graduating in 2002 he returned to Dubuque and worked his way up to become Charlie's Head Chef!



Steve and Charlie are always collaborating to produce exciting and memorable lunches and dinners. For example, many of the appetizers are as tasty as they are unusual. The Alligator Nuggets (pictured above) are tossed in a seasoned tempura batter and fried. They are served with a sweet red pepper aioli. They are surprisingly good and taste a lot like turtle. Calamari is pictured below.



For those not so adventurous the Onion Rings are very popular. They are cut by hand and then dipped in beer batter before frying. My favorite appetizers are the Crab Cakes. All natural handpicked lump crab meat is mixed with fresh chopped vegetables and mayo. They are grill fried so they have the consistency of potato pancakes. You also can't go wrong with the baked crab and shrimp dip pictured below.



Be sure to have some Clam Chowder. This soup is made in house. It is a thick, consistent, traditional chowder overflowing with large clams and chunks of potatoes, celery and onions. You will not find better chowder anywhere, not even in New England.

The lunch menu includes four different hamburgers plus the Buffalo Burger supplied by the Iowa Bison Company (Jalapeño burger pictured at right). However, the lunch specialty is the Fish Sandwich. This is a Filet of Ponga, also known as a Yellowtail Catfish. The white meat is lightly breaded with seasoned flour. It is accompanied by



a homemade sweet chili tartar sauce. Other very popular specialties are the Ponga Fish and Chips (below) and the Fried Shrimp.



All of these wonderful lunches are served with Charlie's famous homemade French fries. Freshly cut potatoes are fried in a dedicated fryer and sprinkled with sea salt.



This restaurant prides itself on serving meals that are slightly unusual and their Reuben (above) is a prime example. Shaved and chopped corned beef is mixed with sauerkraut and Thousand Island dressing and served on grilled rye bread with Swiss cheese.



One of the signature dinner entrées is Charlie's Catfish. Farm raised filets are lightly dusted in a Cajun cornmeal, fried and served with a sweet red pepper tartar sauce. Mayonnaise, chopped onion, pickle relish and lemon juice are combined to make this perfect complimentary sauce.



The Bourbon Salmon (pictured top left of the page) is another one of those unusual but scrumptious dinners. Wild Alaskan Keta Salmon is marinated for 36 hours in brown sugar and bourbon marinade. The Walleye is a Canadian filet drizzled with an amazing butter, lemon caper sauce.



People visit Catfish Charlie's from all over the Midwest. Many of them have a craving for the King Crab or Twin Lobster Tails.

The restaurant is currently using 10-12 Alaskan king crab legs. This means there are on average 10 legs to 12 lbs. of crab. The Lobster dish is two cold water wild caught Canadian tails.

Fresh seafood is flown in once per week. The Chef buys small quantities so it is only available until sold out. On week-ends there are frequent special discounts of 4 to 5 dollars off to help diners enjoy fresh fish at very affordable prices.

Of course, the cooks are all seafood experts. They are also quite talented with meats as well.



Charlie's Special Ribs are dry rubbed with in-house blend of seasonings. Then they are smoked in hickory for 7 hours and then slow roasted for another 15 hours at a carefully controlled temperature. The steaks are aged, choice grade and hand cut. The Steak Eater's Steak is a baseball cut top sirloin, center cut personally selected by Charlie. The Ribeye is a pound of steak char-broiled just the way you like it.



You know I always say save room for dessert. I recommend you select one of Chef Neece's home baked delights available Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

And speaking of Sunday: it's a good day to visit for Brunch. Omelets are made to order. You can have them along with chicken, ham, beef, catfish, bacon, sausage, biscuits and gravy, French toast and salads.

There are always special events going on at Charlie's too. Be sure to check their website for upcoming events. Beer and wine dinners will be starting in mid October. There are also many catered and fund raising events as well.

With so many things to do and meals to try it is not surprising a 2010 issue of Plain Outdoors Magazine gave Catfish Charlie's its highest rating. Outdoor Life Magazine ranked it number 2 in the US for restaurants by the water and Midwest Living listed it as one of its 60 restaurants worth taking a trip to visit.