



## Chef Ivo's Place

by Rich Belmont

You probably noticed a few barbecue restaurants have come and gone from the Tri-States area in the last few months. That's because running a barbecue (also known as BBQ, B-B-Que, Bar-B-Que and Bar-B-Cue) place is not easy. While BBQ is the oldest cooking method known to man it is also a method involving fire and smoke. In a restaurant, fire is the easy part; smoke not so much. Smoke requires a reliable source of wood. And not just any wood, it has to be wood capable of producing flavorful smoking properties effective in permeating all kinds of meats. Then those meats must be rubbed with special spices and sauces and cooked for long periods at controlled temperatures all the while engulfed by hot, pungent smoke.



Lucky for us there is a smokehouse in Galena, IL called Chef Ivo's Place. Its namesake is a Certified Executive Chef who is also a master of BBQ.

Chef Ivo's Place opened on March 1, 2013 on the second floor of the Galena Cellars Wine building on Main Street in Galena. It's inside an 1840's granary building that was restored in 1985 by the Lawlor family, owners of Galena Cellars Vineyard & Winery.



Chef Ivo's Place is owned by Chef Ivo Puidak (pronounced Ee-Vo Pwee-Dak) and his wife Shelly. They also own the Galena Canning Company which has two stores on Main Street as well. Chef Ivo began his career peeling pea pods in a Chinese restaurant in Chicago. He then became a kitchen helper at the now defunct Scotch & Sirlain. He attended Harper College in Palatine, IL and went on to get his culinary degree at the Culinary Institute of Americas in Hyde Park, NY. He continued his studies at the French Culinary Institute in Paris. Sometime later he was invited to serve as a private chef to the Chairman of the Board and Board of Governors of the United States Federal Reserve System in Washington, D.C.

Over 20 years ago Chef Ivo and Shelly moved to Galena to operate a bed and breakfast. They provided their guests with fresh baked rolls and breads and soon began offering homemade jams and jellies to go with their baked goods. Pretty soon they were selling jams, salsas, and syrups at the Galena County Fair and other farmer's markets.

They opened the Galena Canning Company in 2006 at 106 S. Main Street. That original location has pasta and BBQ sauces and nearly 2000 varieties of hot sauces including the infamous Dave's Ghost Pepper Hot Sauce. This was made from the Bhut Jolokia which was the hottest pepper on the planet until 2011. It is 3 times hotter than the habanero and 400 times hotter than Tabasco sauce. Chef Ivo says he is now offering this sauce with the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion pepper, now considered the hottest pepper on earth.

In 2010 the Galena Canning Company opened a 2nd store across the street from the first. Here you can sample and buy hundreds of pickles, flavored oils, vinegars, hand stuffed olives, relishes, mustards and sauces all prepared to Chef Ivo's exact specifications. Many of his products have been featured on Good Morning America, NBC, ABC, Fox, the Jay Leno Show, David Letterman, Oprah, Martha Stewart, The Food Network and in the Chicago Tribune and New York Times.

As you look over the menu at Chef Ivo's Place you will quickly see the restaurant is a showcase for all the tantalizing sauces and condiments available in the Canning Company. For starters there are the Nachos made with homemade tortilla chips and covered with BBQ sauce, choice of



meat, lettuce, salsa, diced jalapeños and black olives. The Fried Dill Pickles are most enjoyable. They come with an Onion Blossom Horseradish Dip. This dipping sauce combines Sweet Vidalia onions, horseradish, a little mayo and mustard and a dash of what Chef calls "culinary magic".



Another unusual appetizer is the Pheasant Egg Rolls (above). Free Range Pheasant is wrapped in an egg roll with vegetables and served with Sweet Thai Chili and Wasabi dipping sauce. My favorite starter is the Burnt Ends trimmings from the smoker (below). They are pot luck and can be



a combination of everything that gets smoked including brisket, pork butt, sausage, turkey and pheasant. They are served with BBQ sauce and Horseradish mustard and are very tasty morsels. The chicken wings are real jumbo wings. Chef Ivo's wings are only 7 or 8 to a pound. Choose one of nine sauces including Buffalo Wing, the very hot Basting sauce and the so-hot-steam-is-coming-out-of-your-ears Ghost Pepper sauce.

### Chef Ivo's Place

515 S. Main Street, Galena, IL 61036, 815-777-8500

GalenaCanning.com | Facebook.com/ChefIvosPlace

HOURS: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. or later (Midnight in Summer), Tuesday: Closed

DINING STYLE: Casual

NOISE LEVEL: Loud on week-ends

RECOMMENDATIONS: Burnt Ends, Pheasant Egg Rolls, Fried Dill Pickles, Jumbo Wings, Pulled Pork Sandwich, Smoked Brisket, Grilled Salmon w/Lemon caper sauce, St. Louis Ribs, Fish Tacos, Four Cheese Mac

LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar

PRICE RANGE: Lunch: \$7 - \$13; Dinner: \$7 - \$22

PAY OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards, No Checks

ACCESSIBILITY: No

KIDS POLICY: No Menu but Kid friendly side dishes, High Chairs and Boosters

RESERVATIONS: Call Ahead for Parties of 6 or more

CATERING: Yes TAKE OUT: Yes DELIVERY: No

PARKING: On street and in adjoining municipal lot



It's a good idea to check the blackboard for off menu specials. For example, on the night of our visit there was an appetizer called Brisket Con Queso. This delightful dish was a blend of brisket with provolone, horseradish cheddar, baby Swiss, smoked Gouda, aged cheddar and parmesan and Romano cheeses.



If you like seafood you will love the Grilled Fish Tacos. There is no generic mystery fish in these tacos. The fresh fish of the day is grilled and layered in flour tortillas with shaved cabbage, vegetable mango salsa, Thai Chili Sauce and wasabi. The fish could be anything from Marlin, Mahi-mahi, Flounder, Halibut, Jamaican Jerk Bluefish or Opakapaka also known as the Hawaiian Pink Snapper.



On my next visit I plan on having Chef Ivo's Four Cheese Mac again. The cheese is an enticing blend of Horseradish Cheddar, Provolone, Parmesan, Romano and aged cheddar. Instead of being served over the usual elbow macaroni it is blended into rotini which does a much better job of catching the cheese blend. Pictured above is the mac with brisket on top on the left and the Porker on the right.

On a recent tasting session my tasting team thoroughly enjoyed their dinners which ranged from sandwiches to more than you can possibly eat entrées. These included the Pulled Pork Sandwich (pictured far left). The pork is slowly smoked for over 16 hours. We enjoyed it with Jalapeño Honey Sauce. We also had The Chuckwagon sandwich absolutely stuffed with Brisket, Pork, Sausage, Bacon and Cheddar. The Porker is two meals in one: Four Cheese Mac buried under a massive pile of Burnt Ends, Turkey, Chicken, Sausage, Pork Brisket and Bacon.

One of the sandwiches is the Chef Ivo's Famous Meatball. They are so well known because meatballs are used in the Canning Company stores for sampling sauces. They are simply made from ground beef, a little bread crumbs and fresh herbs. About 200 pounds of meatballs are given away for free every summertime week-end.



The Tasting Crew was well taken care of by Ivo's friendly and knowledgeable staff including Laynie Garton, Bar Manager, and our servers April and Karin. We all thoroughly enjoyed our entrées: The Jumbo Louisiana Gulf Shrimp were served in two ways. Lightly breaded and fried

with a cocktail and Remoulade sauce (tartar sauce with capers, dill and fresh parsley) and sautéed with a white wine, garlic and butter sauce (above).

The Ribs (bottom, left) are excellent. First they are hand rubbed with a heavy coating of Chef Ivo's special finely ground spice mix one to two days before cooking. Then they are smoked for 5 and one half hours over an assortment of woods including mesquite, apple, cherry and pecan.

Incidentally, all the smoked entrées are served with your choice of 5 special sauces. They are Hickory Sweet Onion, Roasted Garlic, Hickory Apple, Jalapeño Honey and Moppin & Sopping Sauce. These sauces are all wonderful: the Hickory Apple is the most popular and I especially enjoy the Jalapeño Honey.

However, the real standout sauce is the Moppin & Sopping Sauce! It was developed by trial and error specifically for Chef Ivo's son Max who is a sophisticated sophomore at Vanderbilt University. In BBQ jargon a Mop or Sop is a thin solution that is dripped over meat adding moisture to prevent the drying of meat smoked for long periods of time. This sauce is generously and repeatedly brushed or mopped onto meat as it is cooking. Max insisted the sauce needed to be Southern style, not too thin or thick, with just enough tang to make the various meats pop. His dad finally satisfied him with this vinegar based BBQ sauce with fresh tomatoes, Vidalia onion, Worcestershire sauce, bourbon and other secret ingredients.

Also on the menu is Chef Ivo's famous Étouffée. He says this is famous because it was the dish that got him invited onto the Food Network. Étouffée is French for "smothered" and is used to describe cooking with little or no liquid in a tightly sealed pot. New Orleans Style Étouffée is a flour and butter roux over rice. In this restaurant it is served over rotini pasta and is prepared with the Holy Trinity (onions, bell peppers and celery) plus garlic, tomatoes and fresh basil. It is slow simmered with Cajun hot sauce and filé gumbo. Filé powder is a spicy herb made from dried and ground leaves of the sassafras tree. It is added as a thickener and imparts a savory flavor to gumbo.



By now, you will certainly have had enough to eat. I do hope you saved room for dessert, though. During our visits the sweets were decadent! They included Kentucky Bourbon Pecan Pie, Carrot Cake and my favorite: Triple Chocolate Godiva Cheesecake.

Before you leave Chef Ivo's Place take a look around. Everything you see is from Chef Ivo's personal collection of hobbies and interests including taxidermy, sports memorabilia, martial arts and model boat and motor making.