



Embe Eatery & Lounge

by Rich Belmont



When you are walking on South Main Street in Galena, IL it's possible to walk right by Embe without noticing it. The sign is high up on the building and the eatery isn't very big.

What caught my attention, though, was the little sign in the window proclaiming Embe features homemade, natural deli style food right up until the bar's 1am closing time. The sign further states there is an enormous selection of beers, cocktails and martinis and there is live music every week-end.

Embe (pronounced EMM-BEE) is owned and operated by Mary Beth Forsberg and her son Charlie Quick. Embe is named after Mary's nickname of M for Mary and Be for Beth. She answers to Mary, Mary Beth or Embe so take your pick.



This little eatery and lounge (that's bar for you young people: does anybody call them a lounge anymore?) is directly across the street from the DeSoto House. It's in a building that was erected in 1847 and has housed many businesses including a couple of clothing stores, a dentist's office, a small museum and at one time even live fish bait was sold out the back.

Mary started Embe three and a half years ago and before that she operated CC Dithers Clothing Boutique just up the street for 17 years.

However, Mary is no stranger to the food service business. While she was still in high school she started working in an Italian restaurant in Algonquin, IL called Simonini's Corner. Then she continued building her food career for several years at the Cary Country Club in Cary, IL.

She wasn't the all-work-and-no-play type of girl either. She probably doesn't want me to tell you she also played keyboard in an all girl band called Candyland. She used to hang out at a place in Chicago called the Kinetic Playground that hosted famous rock bands. Back in the day she and Jimi Hendrix were good friends.

Charlie learned how to run a restaurant and bar while working at Grandpa's Deli in Barrington, IL. Charlie and his mom run a very organized and efficient operation. Their employees are all dedicated and experienced. They are considered members of the family and are called co-workers. Everyone is cross trained and can do every job from making homemade sandwich spreads, dressings and soups to making drinks. And boy can they make drinks. Charlie and his expert mixologists, Courtney Casino and Dave Rakusek, are always experimenting with cocktail recipes and creating new ones.



The Specialty Drinks are all unusual, colorful and so lip-smacking good! The Cucumber Collins is smooth and refreshing and the most requested. Effen (the word is Dutch for smooth) cucumber vodka from Holland is mixed with half sweet and sour and half lemonade. The Twisted Sister is a combination of the ingredients in two shakers. The first one contains X Rated Fusion

Liqueur with citron, OJ and cranberry and the second one has Midori and sour. My favorite is the OR-G on the Beach. It has OR-G French vodka, papaya, mango, lime, citron, OJ, cranberry and pineapple juice. If you order this one I dare you to have just one!

There are also a number of Specialty Shooters to choose from. For example there is the House Signature 815 Bomb made with pineapple vodka, pineapple juice and Red Bull or Dave's Homemade Cherry. This one is made from a 5 pound tub of cherries mixed with secret ingredients.



Embe has a number of Specialty Martinis too. Right now the Specialty Board lists eleven of them. You might like a Pomegranate or Bloody Mary Martini. Some of them make great desserts. For instance, the Fat Elvis is peanut butter dissolved in vanilla vodka with chocolate bananas. Or how about this one, the Jamaican Ten Speed: a tropical blend of banana, melon, Malibu, OJ and cream. I love Snickers so of course I have to order the Snickers Martini which is chocolate vodka, caramel vodka, Frangelico and heavy cream.

Embe says they have an enormous selection of beers and that's no lie. In fact there are 88 beers in stock, 6 of them on tap. Some of the newest arrivals are Potosi Tangerine IPA, Tall Grass Buffalo Sweat, Shiner Ruby Redbird, Capital Supper Club and Rogue Juniper Pale Ale.



Embe has a wonderful selection of salads, too. There are currently six on the menu waiting to be drizzled with your favorite homemade dressing. There are seven dressings to choose from and Mary says they are so popular she is having them bottled for takeout and expects to have them available by Thanksgiving.

Embe Eatery & Lounge

233 S. Main Street, Galena, IL 61036
608-348-5000 www.EmbeGalena.com
www.facebook.com/embe.galena

HOURS: Mon - Sun: 7 days 11 a.m. - 1 a.m.

DINING STYLE: Come as you are

NOISE LEVEL: Conversational; Loud during live music

RECOMMENDATIONS: Cream of Mushroom Soup, Beef and Turkey, Caryn, Almost Famous Charlie's Way, Beef and Bleu, Screaming MB, Embe Salad, Hot Bread Pudding

LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, Specialty Drinks, Shooters, Specialty Martinis, 88 Beers

PRICE RANGE: \$4.25 - \$8.95

PAY OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, All Credit, Local Checks

ACCESSIBILITY: Front Door & Restrooms

KIDS POLICY: Welcome but no menu, highchairs or boosters

RESERVATIONS: Yes for up to 12 persons

CATERING: Yes **TAKE OUT:** Yes **DELIVERY:** No

PARKING: On Street



I highly recommend you try one of the two soups that can be ordered on any day. They are made from scratch on the premises. The signature soup is the Embe Cream of Mushroom. For this soup a mixture of roux and gluten-free rice flour is combined with broth, chicken base, special seasonings and at least 3 different kinds of fresh mushrooms. I recently had Bleu Cheese and Kale soup that tasted way better than it sounds.



Embe has acquired a well deserved reputation for excellent sandwiches. They are all true deli-meat style sandwiches because they comply with established deli criteria: First, delicatessen lunchmeats must be of high quality. Here only Hormel Natural Choice Premium Deli Meats are used. They have no chemicals or preservatives. Second, deli meat must be sliced very thin. All Embe cold cuts are thin-sliced in the kitchen and only as needed. Third, the bread must be artisan quality. Embe has sourdough and wheat rolls baked locally to their specifications. And fourth, toppings are limited so the flavors of the meats are not overpowered.



So the Caryn (left) is perfectly seasoned hot pulled chicken with a little Embe horseradish mustard and a sprinkling of parmesan cheese. The Beef and Bleu is cold roast beef with just the right amount of bleu cheese dressing. The Screaming MB is a delicious combination of pastrami and corned beef topped with melted Swiss cheese, horseradish mustard, chopped dill pickle and homemade coleslaw. I like the Big Joe sliced pastrami or corned

beef with Embe horseradish mustard, chopped dill pickle and melted Swiss cheese. Probably my favorite, though, is the Lisa So Rare: very rare roast beef sliced paper thin piled high on a toasted sourdough bun with a little horseradish mustard, it is so good!



The kitchen crew is always happy to customize your sandwich. As a case in point, a few regulars like to request the Daverator (above). This is a combination of The Dave, a sandwich consisting of your choice of roast beef, ham, pork or turkey and Caesar pesto and The Refrigerator which includes all of these meats. So by combining the two you get all the meats and the pesto. Many of the experienced customers will add coleslaw to their sandwich. That's because the slaw is exceptional. It is made in small batches all day long so it doesn't get soupy and the mayo dressing is kept to a minimum so the cabbage is always crispy.



I have observed the sandwiches are made with lunchmeats layered about an inch thick. I have also noted the dressings are used sparingly. They remind me of The Big Bang Theory's Sheldon Cooper exclaiming his pleasure with a hamburger in Series 1, Episode 5. Like Sheldon's hamburger, Embe's sandwiches have "a much more satisfying meat to bun to condiment ratio".

You must not forget to save room for dessert at Embe, either. The Hot Bread Pudding (below) is simply marvelous! Day-old wheat rolls are mixed with butter, eggs, whipping cream, milk, sugar, raisins, slivered almonds and homemade rum sauce. There are people who come from Chicago and Madison just to have some of Embe's Bread Pudding. In fact, every Wednesday is Sweet Tooth Wednesday when you get a free bread pudding with your order for any full-sized sandwich.



While you are at Embe take a look at the paintings. They are acrylics done by world-renowned artist Mark Skidmore. He painted these music themed works of art specifically for Embe. The current three paintings are The Beatles, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and The Doors. They are available for purchase and proceeds go to an ongoing cancer benefit. You might even want to visit Skidmore Art Gallery (www.skidmoreart.com) which is just a few doors south of Embe on Main Street. All of Mark's art is as awe-inspiring as it is beautiful. However, his pastels are particularly magnificent. These are the ones framed under glass because they are painted with a chalk substance. Mark uses only his fingers and no brushes when he does these. It's hard to imagine how he can possibly do all the intricate details with just his fingertips!

Embe's is not only a great place to eat and drink it's also a great place to have a great time. Every Friday and Saturday night the live entertainment starts at 9 pm and there is no cover charge. Last week-end the music was provided by Box Car Phantoms and Slip Silo. This week-end the Girl from Wisconsin will appear on Friday and Saturday the music is provided by the Dawn.