



**Panera Bread**

by Rich Belmont



If you have never enjoyed a meal at Panera Bread you must be one of the ten people in the Tri-States who have not done so. I say this because the place is always busy and when I go there I constantly run into people I know.

There is no doubt Panera Bread is a very popular place. In 2012, the most recent year data is available, the company joined the Fortune 1000 with \$1.8 billion in revenue and \$3.4 billion in system wide sales including franchises. Its stock is traded publically on NASDAQ. On June 10, 1991 shares topped out at \$13.25 and according to Yahoo! Finance on April 7th they were trading at \$166.19!

The first Panera Bread store was actually called the Saint Louis Bread Company. It was started in Kirkwood, MO in 1987. By 1993 it had grown to a 19 store chain around Saint Louis. In that year Ron Shaich (pronounced Shake) owner of the 125 store Au Bon Pain French bakery-café chain purchased the Saint Louis Bread Company for \$23 million. Today there are over 100 Panera stores around Saint Louis and they are still known as Saint Louis Bread Company.



By 1998 the Saint Louis Bread Company was selling bagels, pastries, breakfast items and take-home bread. In that year Ron Shaich and his board decided to change the name to Panera, a word meaning "Time of Bread" in Latin.

In 1999, Au Bon Pain was sold off and all resources were devoted to expanding Panera Bread. It quickly grew into the premier fast casual restaurant chain, offering soups, salads and sandwiches. Even so, the chain has never lost sight of the fact that it is first and foremost a bakery. If you look closely at the company's logo you will see it is the face of "Mother Bread".

Panera's slogan is "A loaf of bread in every arm". There are 20 commercial bakeries around the country delivering fresh dough to every store every day. And each store is a retail bakery where you are presented with a veritable feast of just-baked-this-morning assorted breads, bagels, scones, pastries and cookies.

Panera Bread's headquarters is in Saint Louis and there are currently about 1800 stores in the chain. They are located throughout the US and Canada. Only six states do not yet have Panera Bread: Utah, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Alaska and Hawaii. Readers of the Daily Meal Food Blog voted Panera the Best Sandwich Chain, out of 65 entries in 2013. In 2008 a Health Magazine study judged Panera to be North America's healthiest fast casual restaurant.

All 18 stores in Iowa are owned by Panera Bread of Iowa whose offices are in Cedar Rapids.



Dubuque's Panera Bread store opened 9 years ago. Jeff Holder recently took over as General Manager. He is a highly talented and experienced 30 year veteran of the food industry who has owned and managed several restaurants in Galena, IL and the surrounding area. Jeff says he has an easy job because this restaurant is actually run by two experienced and capable Assistant Managers who have been here since it opened: Michele Hanson and Lacey Buxton.



Fresh dough is delivered every day to Dubuque's Panera Bread from Elk Grove Village, IL. The truck arrives every night at 7 pm. The bakers come in at 10 pm and magically create all the delicious breads and pastries so they are ready for you to enjoy starting at 6 in the morning. None of the baked goods are sold beyond the day they are baked. In accordance with the Panera Day-End Dough-Nation Program each year the chain gives away 100 million dollars worth of unsold baked goods. Every night the Dubuque location donates all left over breads and pastries to several local food banks.

**Panera Bread**  
**3243 Kennedy Circle, Dubuque, IA 52002**  
**563-690-1719**  
[www.PaneraBread.com](http://www.PaneraBread.com) / [Facebook.com/Panera Bread](https://www.facebook.com/PaneraBread)  
**HOURS:** Mon – Sat: 6 a.m. – 9 p.m., Sun: 7 a.m. – 8 p.m.  
**DINING STYLE:** Casual **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational  
**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Breads, Pastries, Bagels, You-Pick 2, Bacon, Egg & Cheese Bagel, Four Cheese Soufflé, Italian Combo, Roasted Turkey & Avocado BLT, French Onion Soup, Fuji Apple Salad, Pesto Sacchettini, Daily Soup, Fruit Smoothies  
**LIQUOR SERVICE:** None  
**PRICES:** \$2.39 - \$9.99  
**PAYMENT OPTIONS:** Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards, Panera Gift Cards, NO Checks  
**ACCESSIBILITY:** Ramp to front door & Restrooms  
**KIDS POLICY:** Welcome! Kids Menu, High Chair  
**RESERVATIONS:** No **CATERING:** Yes  
**TAKE OUT:** Yes **DELIVERY:** No  
**PARKING:** Front & Back Private Lot

I love to go to Panera for breakfast. Sometimes I will have the Bacon Egg and Cheese sandwich consisting of fried egg, Vermont white cheddar and applewood-smoked bacon on an Asiago Cheese Bagel. Other times I like the Mediterranean Egg White with Vermont white cheddar, roasted tomatoes, fresh spinach and basil pesto on Ciabatta.

When I have the time and can linger for awhile I will order a Four Cheese or Spinach & Artichoke Soufflé. In case you are not familiar with this a Soufflé (soo-FLAY) is a lightly baked cake made with egg yolks and beaten egg whites combined with other ingredients. A soufflé has a cream sauce and egg white beaten into a soft peak meringue. When it comes out of the oven it is puffed up but falls in on itself after a few minutes. When you pick up your soufflé it looks like somebody squashed down on it but don't worry, that's the way it is supposed to look. All of the breakfast items go really well with a Caffe Mocha, Latte or Cappuccino. The brewed coffees are always fresh, too. You will notice all the carafes have a time shown on them: the coffee is replaced every hour so it is always freshly brewed.

Now that I'm thinking about it I go to Panera Bread for lunch quite frequently, too. All the soups are brimming with tantalizing flavors. There are 7 soups every day and they are available according to a set schedule. Some are on the menu all the time like Chicken Noodle and Broccoli Cheddar and some are only served on certain days like New England clam chowder on Fridays. I particularly enjoy the French Onion served in the optional sourdough bread bowl.

There are 13 salads to choose from. You can order a fresh Greek, Classic or Caesar Salad. Then there are 7 different salads featuring Panera's all-natural antibiotic-free chicken. These salads are all works of art. For example the Fuji Apple Chicken Salad is a bowl full of chicken slices, field greens, romaine lettuce, vine-ripened

tomatoes, red onions, pecans, Gorgonzola, and apple chips and is tossed with white balsamic apple vinaigrette.

The sandwiches are an exploration of interesting flavor pairings. There are several vegetarian choices like the Tomato & Mozzarella Panini with roasted and fresh tomatoes, chopped basil and sun-dried tomato pesto on grilled Ciabatta. I enjoy the Italian Combo: packed between slices of Ciabatta are seared steak, smoked turkey, smoked ham, salami, Swiss cheese, pepperoncini, lettuce, tomato, red onions and special sauce. The Roasted Turkey & Avocado BLT is a house specialty: all natural, antibiotic-free roasted turkey, applewood smoked bacon,



lettuce, tomato and fresh avocado slices are piled high on sourdough bread and smeared with a reduced fat olive oil mayo. One of the reasons these sandwiches are so good is because all of the breads they are served on were baked not more than a few hours earlier.

And speaking of breads I usually take home a loaf for later. It might be a baguette, ciabatta, focaccia or sesame semolina, rye, French or sourdough loaf. There are 15 different Artisan or Specialty breads in all.

The You Pick Two is a popular option. You choose pasta or a soup and a sandwich or salad and receive a half portion of each.

Sometimes when I do not wish to take the time to go to one of my favorite Italian restaurants I will visit Panera for a quick pasta dinner. In 2010 they branched out from the usual soup, salad and sandwiches by introducing their own version of Mac & Cheese. It's really good! The pasta is Conchiglie Rigate (ridged shells) and is mixed with an elegant creamy sauce. This cheese blend is made with butter, flour, milk, white American cheese, extra sharp white Vermont cheddar, a little Dijon mustard, salt and a little hot sauce.

Recently Panera added more pasta dishes including Tortellini Alfredo and Chicken Sorrentina. I like the Pesto Sacchettini. This is Italian for "little sacks" and is similar to tortellini or ravioli. The little sacks are stuffed with a six cheese blend of ricotta, parmesan, Romano, Monterey jack and mozzarella. The dominant flavor is ricotta which pairs well with nut-free olive oil and basil pesto.



Now before I can declare you an expert on Panera Bread I must tell you about the secret menu! Panera currently has six off-menu entrées. Every employee knows about them so you can order them at any time. They are Power Egg White Bowl with Roasted Turkey; Power Egg Bowl with Steak; Power Chicken Hummus Bowl; Power Mediterranean Roasted Turkey Salad; Power Mediterranean Chicken Salad; and Power Steak Lettuce Wraps.

So now that you know all about Panera Bread it's time to have dessert. Choose from a tasty assortment of muffins, cupcakes, cookies, pastries and sweet rolls. Remember when at Panera do as the Panerans do: "Live Consciously, Eat Deliciously!"

