



## Rhody's Food & Spirits

by Rich Belmont

You have probably driven on Old Highway Road in Dubuque on the way to the Dubuque County Fairgrounds many, many times. When you did you passed right by Rhody's Food & Spirits. So did you stop in for some food and drink? Yeah, me neither. Locals living in the area have often said I was missing out on a good thing. They would tell me Rhody's, located just 4 tenths of a mile East of the Fairgrounds, is one of the few places left where you can get good meals with a lot of food for not a lot of money.



Rhody's Food & Spirits was established in 2004 by Donna Miller. She named the restaurant after a long ago imaginary friend. And now, six years later, she has fulfilled her dream of providing delicious home cooked style, made from scratch, meals to regular folks living on tight budgets.



Rhody's offers a casual atmosphere with an affable staff. Donna is proud to say her business is family owned and operated. Her Mom, Roberta Oberhoffer, helps keep things organized and her daughter, Melissa Miller, a recent college graduate, is both a cook and a waitress. She does a great job because after all she has been doing it since she was 15!



To be sure Rhody's is not a fancy place. However, as soon as you enter you are immediately treated like family. You can expect a warm welcome from Donna, Roberta and Melissa and the entire crew: cook Rita Sullivan, bartenders

Jim Gulyash and Rick May and all the waitresses. They are all very friendly and accommodating so it really doesn't matter if you are served by Hannah Heir, Joyce Freiberger, Sara Watter, Janet Engelken or her sister Jane Geselbracht.



The kitchen opens at 11:00 am and gets busy right away. It's easy to see why. The burgers are hand formed, choice grade, and fresh (never frozen) ground beef mixed with special house seasonings. The Bacon Cheeseburger is very popular but those in the know choose the Mushroom & Swiss with added bacon (pictured above). If you are really hungry though, the Big Kahuna is 21 ounces of

ground beef with your choice of two toppings served on Texas toast. All burgers come with fries and either coleslaw, macaroni salad or potato salad. You have a choice of fries, too. The regular fries are coated with a light batter or you can have waffle fries sprinkled with house made seasonings.



When I visited during lunch I noticed a lot of Philly Steaks were being served (above). This sandwich was full of sirloin beefsteak covered with sautéed onions, mushrooms and green peppers and topped with Swiss and American cheese. I also noticed there were many orders for the Chicken Bacon Ranch Wraps (below). Crispy chicken is mixed into lettuce, cheese, tomatoes and onions and wrapped in a fresh flour tortilla. For those of you who don't usually do wraps the Grilled Chicken Club is a very tasty alternative. A grilled chicken breast is topped with bacon and Swiss cheese on a hoagie bun. This sandwich is intriguing because it is served with Cusabi dressing. Cusabi is a combination of cucumber and wasabi Japanese horseradish. When made into a dressing it offers a tantalizing flavor.



**Rhody's Food & Spirits**  
 14167 Old Highway Road, Dubuque, IA  
 563-585-1500  
**HOURS:** Monday-Saturday: 9 a.m. - close, closed Sunday  
**DINING STYLE:** Casual **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational  
**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Hot Wings, Half Pound Burgers, Philly Steak, Chicken Bacon Ranch Wrap, Fried Chicken, Rib-Eye Steak, Hamburger Steak, BBQ Ribs, and Fresh Baked Pies  
**LIQUOR SERVICE:** Full Bar, Bottle Beer Only, Signature Drinks  
**PRICES:** Lunch: \$6.49 to \$10.49; Dinner: \$8.49 - \$18.49  
**PAYMENT OPTIONS:** Cash, Debit, Checks, MC, Visa, Discover, Amex, ATM on premises  
**ACCESSIBILITY:** Front Door and Restrooms  
**KIDS POLICY:** Menu, High Chairs & Booster Seats  
**RESERVATIONS:** Yes **CATERING:** Yes **TAKE OUT:** Yes  
**DELIVERY:** Yes - large groups, **PARKING:** Large Private Lot

The daily lunch specials taste like they are home cooked and are full meals for hungry eaters. They remind me of going to grandma's house for lunch. The Monday special is Cook's Choice and might be a hamburger steak or a pork loin dinner. Tuesday is an all beef meatloaf with mashed potatoes and vegetable. On Wednesday the special is 2 pieces of Fried Chicken cooked in a Henny Penny fryer at low temperature under controlled low pressure. A Taco Bar is set up on Thursday and Friday is an open face Roast Beef. The beef is especially tasty because Inside Round is slow cooked and twice roasted with specially prepared in-house seasonings. Friday specials of baked or fried cod or catfish are also available during Lent.

Rhody's is a great place for dinner. I just found this out but apparently the local citizens have known this for years. When I arrived one recent evening I didn't think I would get a table since the parking lot was nearly full. I needn't have worried, though, because during several lunch visits I didn't see the side room. It's open for dinner except when it is used for private parties. It accommodates up to 55 people in a warm, cozy atmosphere.

Dinners at Rhody's are very good. For starters there are the usual Hot Wings, Nachos, Garlic Bread and Nacho Supreme Platters. My party of 4 decided on the Combo Platter consisting of French fries, onion rings, mushrooms, cheese curds, mini tacos and chicken strips.



Bryce Parks, my dinner companion and 365ink publisher, suggested we substitute the Chicken Lips for the chicken strips. I thought this was because Bryce just has a thing for lips but it was actually a good decision. Chicken Lips are Melissa's recipe for very thin sliced chicken breast lightly hand breaded with just a little spicy buffalo sauce and served with a Budweiser Blue Cheese dipping sauce. I had to beat Bryce at Indian wrestling in order to get the last one!



There are several enticing dinner entrees. The Rib-Eye is hand cut, always fresh and grilled on a flat top. The Fried Chicken is juicy and coated with a tasty batter. All you have to do is look at that Hamburger steak above to know you've made a wise decision.



The Ribs are Baby Backs seasoned with secret ingredients and baked for at least three hours before being covered with a house BBQ sauce (pictured at right with fried chicken and potatoes). The Ham Steak is a huge hickory smoked bone-in slice of ham.



Particularly popular during this Lenten season is Deep Fried Cod or Shrimp and Cod combination. I am looking forward to my return visit to try the Shrimp Scampi consisting of two skewers of 5 shrimp each covered with Creole seasonings and grilled in a garlic butter and oil sauce. My favorite, though, is an outrageously large hand formed Hamburger Steak totally covered with mushrooms and grilled onions.



Hannah, our waitress, did a superb job catering to our every need and insuring our dinner was properly served. However, she outdid herself when she brought us the dessert tray and presented us with a terrific assortment of pies. Louise Johnson is an extraordinarily accomplished baker. Donna exclaims she is without a doubt the best pie and cake baker in Dubuque! On any night you have at least seven or eight pies and cakes to choose from. They are all made from fresh ingredients. You might find Coconut Cream, Lemon Meringue, Chocolate Silk, Grasshopper, Chocolate Cream, Lemon Cream, Pumpkin, Pumpkin Cream, Butterscotch, Chocolate Butterscotch, Strawberry, Cherry, Apple, Peach, Pecan, or my new found favorite: Sour Cream and Raisin.

Rhody's Food & Spirits is off the beaten path. But it is easy to get to and well worth the drive when you want fine food and made from scratch pies at reasonable prices.