



Spruce Harbor Inn
by Rich Belmont



My wife's friend Judy Glab of Dubuque is an expert in finding restaurants that offer great meals at reasonable prices. So when she offered to take us to one of her favorite places I said "let's go!"

I had never even heard of Spruce Harbor Inn in Bellevue, IA. But I soon learned it was only a 30 minute, 21.5 mile ride though scenic eastern Iowa.

Spruce Harbor Inn is located on the bank of the Mississippi River right next to Jackson County's Spruce Creek Park Marina. It's not an easy place to find so when I arrived there for a moment I thought I was Hansel and I had just come upon the wicked witch's gingerbread and candy cane house hidden in a Spruce forest.



This restaurant is in a beautiful area and off the beaten path but it's easy to get to. From the Julien Dubuque Bridge you go south on Highway 151 for 2 miles then turn left onto Highway 52 South and go 18 miles. Before you get to Bellevue turn left onto 395th Avenue and right onto 396th Avenue at the sign pointing to Spruce Creek Park. Then you turn right on 308th Avenue and right again onto 400th Avenue and it's right there on your left. There is also a floating dock if you prefer to visit by boat.



This was a small restaurant accommodating boaters and locals when Linda and Chris Frank (pictured top of next column) purchased it January 10, 1988. They installed floor to ceiling windows in September, 1988 and added a patio in 1990. Soon people were coming from all over to enjoy the good food and the peaceful and beautiful view of the Mississippi.

The menu has something for everyone. If you are not too hungry there are a number of sandwiches and when you are famished you have a wide variety of over 16 entrées to choose from. There are beef, ham and pork steaks, fried or grilled chicken and shrimp and pike, catfish and salmon favorites.

The hamburgers are USDA Choice, never frozen 1/3 pounders. The Prime Rib sandwiches are thin sliced and especially tasty when you add sautéed mushrooms, onions and Swiss cheese.

The steaks are excellent. Ribeyes and Top Sirloin Steaks are hand-cut and charbroiled to order. The most popular steak is the Beef Tenderloin which is coated with a lightly peppered seasoning that makes you want to cut it into small bites so you can savor each one slowly. Of course, the same thing can be said about the Prime Rib which is slow roasted and only available on Saturday nights as an off menu special.



The Iowa Ham Steak makes an awesome presentation. When you see it you just know it's going to taste good: it's a pound of bone-in ham overhanging the plate it's served on. During a recent visit I could not decide if I wanted the Pork Porterhouse Steak with the bone or the boneless grilled Pork Ribeye. My friendly waitress, Jessica Medinger, suggested the Pork Ribeye (above). She said it was not only tender and juicy but came with a raspberry and horseradish dipping sauce. I know: sounds weird right? Well I loved it! I could not stop putting every bite into this sauce that complimented the pork so well.

Spruce Harbor Inn
30579 400th Avenue, Bellevue, IA 52031
563-872-5637 | www.SpruceHarborInn.com

HOURS: Memorial to Labor Day:
Mon - Sat: 4:30 pm - Close Sun: 11:30 am - 8 pm
Labor Day - Oct: Fri - Sun Only,
Nov - Dec and March - Memorial Day: Fri-Sat Only
January - February: Closed

DINING STYLE:Casual **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational

RECOMMENDATIONS: Bacon Cheeseburger, Fried or Steamed Extra Colossal Shrimp, Salmon Fillet, Ribeye Steak, Beef Tenderloin, Surf n Turf, Pork Ribeye, Broasted Chicken

LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, Strawberry Daiquiri, Margarita, Old Fashion

PRICES: \$6.99 - \$21.00

PAY OPTIONS: Cash, Checks, Visa, MasterCard, Discover

ACCESSIBILITY: Front Door and Restrooms

KIDS POLICY: Welcome! Menu, High Chair & Booster

RESERVATIONS: Yes **CATERING:** No **TAKE OUT:** Yes

DELIVERY: No **PARKING:** Private Lot

Chris told me the most requested dish overall is the Surf N Turf. You choose one of the 3 steaks on the menu and select 3 very large broasted or steamed shrimp.

In my opinion there are two reasons why the Surf N Turf here is so popular. First of all the beef and shrimp go so well together. And secondly it's because of the enormity of the shrimp served in this restaurant. To say they are impressive is an understatement. Let



me explain. In the United States all shrimp are sold by the count per pound in the shell without the head on. There is a standard rating chart listing the number of shrimp in a pound and a corresponding shrimp size description. Spruce Harbor's menu states in no less than 4 places it serves Jumbo shrimp. Nothing can be further from the truth! Jumbo refers to 21 to 25 shrimp per pound. In fact, in this restaurant the shrimp are so big only 6 equals a pound. According to the chart, 5 to 6 shrimp per pound are called Extra Colossal! When I ordered Shrimp Scampi Linda asked me if I wanted three, four, five or six. The menu stated they were Jumbo so I expected they would be pretty big but not that big so of course I asked for six. However, when she brought me six Extra Colossal Shrimp swimming in garlic butter I was overwhelmed. I would have been happy with just 3 but they were so good I ate all six anyway!

The shrimp can be ordered from the menu steamed, fried in a high pressure Broaster or in Scampi. You can also get them as part



of your Surf n Turf or off the menu as a shrimp cocktail. In fact, I bet if Bryce asked nicely he might even get some wrapped in bacon. Whatever your preference I highly recommend them.



As much as I love the huge shrimp in this place I must not overlook the other fish entrées that are coveted by the local citizens. The Salmon are hand-cut fillets cooked at low temperature on a flat top grill and served with raspberry vinaigrette. The Pike fillets are steamed or hand-dipped and broasted. They are all-you-can-eat on Friday nights. Fantail Breaded Butterfly Shrimp are all-you-can-eat on Saturday nights as well.



After Labor Day the Spruce Harbor Inn will only be open on weekends. It's a good time of year to go for a little ride in the country. After a satisfying dinner stay awhile to watch the Mississippi River flowing by. Take some time to admire the flower garden on the patio that is still in full bloom.

Thanks Judy for taking us to such a great place to eat!

