



BUDDY'S CLUBHOUSE

REVISITED
BY RICH BELMONT

The first time I reviewed Buddy's Clubhouse was in June, 2011. Back then my good friend, Curt Martin who is now the Service Manager at Anderson Weber Toyota, suggested we should dine at this little restaurant with only ten tables.

This unassuming bar and restaurant is tucked away on the corner of Washington and 24th Streets across from Comisky Park. Buddy Spiegelhalter and his wife Terri, are now into their 18th year serving excellent dinners in Dubuque's North End District. For many years this restaurant was owned and operated by Buddy's Uncle Bob. Buddy used to help out at night when he was working during the day at the Dubuque Packing Company. While at The Pack Buddy became a skilled meat cutter. So that's why even today he insists on hand cutting all the restaurant's meats.



Buddy and Terri took over this neighborhood hot spot in January, 1998 and reopened the restaurant as Buddy's Clubhouse on March 6th of that year. Right from the start they had their own ideas on how to run a premier food establishment. For example, only USDA Choice Grade beef is used. It is never frozen and is hand cut the same day it is to be served.

Only real butter is used and sauces, soups, gravies and mashed potatoes are made in-house. The chicken is hand breaded and the shortening in the Broaster is changed after every 60 pieces of chicken. There is a separate fryer for fish so there is no flavor crossover.



So now Margie and I are regular customers. We go there often because the food is delicious and reasonably priced, the people are friendly and the atmosphere is comfortable. Buddy and Terri serve dinners the same way they entertain in their own home. First they offer you some appetizers. Perhaps a combo basket with four of your favorite starters choosing from onion rings, cheddar nuggets, French fries, mozzarella sticks, chicken strips or mini tacos.



Then you help yourself to the soup and salad bar. The lettuce and other salad items are always fresh and there are seasonal



dressings including a new one called Honey- BBQ- Ranch. This dressing is made in the kitchen and it tastes just like its name implies. The soups are veritable works of art. Terri has over 65 cookbooks and she is always trying out new recipes. This week we had Roast Pork Soup. We never know what kind of soup we are going to find. There might be Sirloin Noodle or African Peanut Soup. Another popular one is the Stuffed Green Pepper; made from all the ingredients found in a dinner of stuffed green peppers. Or perhaps we will find the really good Toscano made with sausage and kale in a cream base.



The char-broiler is in constant use. There are eight burgers on the menu. The most popular are the Char Burger (half pounder) and the Buddy Burger (two thirds pounder) served with pickle, lettuce, onion and tomato on the side. Or you can choose the BBQ Burger, Patty Melt, Mushroom and Swiss, Bacon and Cheese or Philly Steak. If you are in the mood for something a little different you might want to try the Carmichael. It's not really a burger but more of a specially seasoned, tenderized cube steak. The steaks are all excellent! Each day Buddy cuts only what he expects to sell that night. The Ribeye is always sweet and tender. So is the Roasted Prime Rib available on Friday and Saturday nights. Many regular customers order it finished off on the char-broiler. This gives it a nice blackened flavor and seals in all the juices. The most popular steak, and my favorite, is the Center Cut Top Sirloin. Buddy carefully slices a Choice Top Butt choosing only the cuts he knows will be tender. We regulars expect the Sirloin Steaks to be melt-in-your-mouth quality.

A couple of my guests kept asking an interesting question. How does a little place next to Comisky Park serve such delicious seafood? One of my friends marveled at the Stuffed Salmon. This dinner consisted of two fillets filled with crabmeat stuffing, then broiled in a convection oven and covered with homemade dill sauce. Another friend enjoyed Jumbo Shrimp (the standard designation for 21/25 shrimp per pound) lightly breaded and fried served with either cocktail or tartar sauce.

There are a couple of off-menu specials that are usually available because they are so popular. These are:



Stickless Ka-Bobs – You choose sirloin steak, chicken or shrimp. Then they are char- broiled and served with fresh vegetable over brown rice. They are called stickless because they are not on skewers.

Catfish Collars – These are fillet strips called collars. They are a highly prized specialty because there are no bones and there is no fishy taste. (Fun Fact: these catfish are caught in the Mississippi River by Wendell Schroeder, a local commercial fisherman. He is well known in this area and goes by the name "Fish Man").



The chicken dishes are a delight. The Fried Chicken is marinated, hand breaded and then cooked in the high pressure Broaster. The Cordon Bleu is char-broiled and topped with ham and Swiss cheese. But the stunner dish is the smothered Chicken Breast. Imagine two char-broiled breasts smothered with sautéed onions, mushrooms and melted Swiss cheese.

The BBQ Pork Ribs are a house specialty. Each rack of baby back ribs is cooked in its own juices inside an aluminum foil pouch for two hours. Then they are finished in the oven only after you have ordered them. Another specialty is something you don't see on too many menus. That would be Liver and Onions. Two lightly floured cuts of liver are sautéed with onions and bacon and then drizzled with homemade au just gravy.

I have observed many people taking advantage of one of Buddy's special features called Create Your Own Platter. When you can't make up your mind what to order you can choose two entrées. Popular combos are Broasted Chicken and BBQ Ribs or Jumbo Fried Shrimp and Sirloin. These are several possible combos listed on the menu but the truth is you can combine any two items from the entire menu.



There is always a group of friendly regulars at the bar. But Buddy's is also a good place to take the children. First, Buddy's location makes getting there an adventure. Second, the food is the just like Grandma's. Third, there is the train made out of Jim Beam Bourbon bottles to check out. And fourth, the kids will enjoy Buddy's famous Lionel O gauge trains circling the bar every half hour. There are two of these. The passenger train is fun to watch but the kids really like the freight train. That's because it stops along its route and drops candy into the hands of the eager little ones.

BUDDY'S CLUBHOUSE

2364 Washington Street, Dubuque, IA 52001

563-588-9932 • BuddysClubhouse.com

Hours: Bar: Wed-Sat 1 PM-Close; Sun-Tue Closed

Dinner: Wed-Thu 5-9 PM; Fri-Sat 5-10 PM; Sun-Tue Closed

Dining Style: Neighborhood Bar & Restaurant

Noise Level: Energetic

Recommendations: Homemade Soups, Top Sirloin, BBQ Pork Ribs, Liver and Onions, Broasted Chicken, Jumbo Shrimp, Smothered Chicken Breasts, Prime Rib, Stickless Ka-Bobs, Catfish Collars.

Liquor Service: Full Bar, Beer on Tap; Domestic Beer only in cans

Prices: Appetizers: \$3.45-\$7.95, Entrées: \$5.95-\$18.95

Pay Options: Cash, Checks, Debit, Credit Cards except AMEX

Accessibility: Five Steps

Kids Policy: Welcome; Kids Menu with no age limit, High Chairs and Boosters

Reservations: From 2 to 12. Good idea; Only 10 tables!

Catering: Yes; Private parties on Sun or Mon

Take Out: Yes • **Delivery:** No

Parking: On Street or use the Comisky Park Parking Lot

