



# CHARLOTTE'S COFFEE HOUSE

BY RICH BELMONT

With new coffee shops popping up all over Dubuque you might not have noticed Charlotte's Coffee House at the corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and White Streets. It has been in operation for six months and already has a devoted following of coffee aficionados.



Don Rusk and his wife, Cheryl, are Dubuque natives and the owners of Charlotte's Coffee House. Don also owns and operates Rusk Metal Company in Epworth, IA. He has been in the metal business for over 20 years.

Cheryl recently retired from John Deere Dubuque Works where she was employed for 39 years. Cheryl has always liked to bake and at work she was affectionately known as the "cookie lady."

Cheryl convinced her husband she was going to need something to do after she retired. They decided a coffee shop where she could continue to utilize her baking skills would be a good idea. In the fall of 2012 they purchased the two buildings at 1104 and 1118 White Street. They were built between 1890 and 1900 and were in total disrepair.

Don and Cheryl hired Jeff Schmidt and his son, Cody, of Top Notch Construction in Dubuque to strip the buildings to their bare walls and completely renovate them. The remodeling even included connecting the two buildings together. Cheryl was the architect and interior designer and when you visit this attractive space you can see she certainly has an eye for details.



This coffee house has beautiful hardwood floors, a fireplace, lounge chairs, impressive wooden tables and artwork available for sale from local artists. The elegant hand carved wood paneling was done by family friend and master woodcarver Jim Gassman. He also crafted the tables from old rafters removed from the buildings during the renovation. He estimates the wood in these tables is close to 200 years old.



So now you might be thinking if this place is owned by Cheryl how come it's called Charlotte's Coffee House? Well, it's because Cheryl named it in remembrance of her mom,

Charlotte, who loved a good cup of coffee and relished conversation with friends.



Don and Cheryl's sons, Tim (left) and Ben, are also working in the business. Tim is expected to become a manager when he graduates from the University of Iowa in May of this year.

Charlotte's is first and foremost a coffee shop. The coffee served here is from suppliers carefully selected by Cheryl. Currently the suppliers are:

**Intelligentsia Coffee and Tea** – This company was established in 1995 and buys most of its beans directly from growers in Central America, South America, East Africa and Ethiopia. It is headquartered in Chicago and uses gas-powered Ideal Rapid GotHot Roasters. These machines date from the 1950's and were handcrafted from cast-iron and steel in Stuttgart, Germany.

**Up Roasters** – This company is located in Minneapolis. It selects the best available coffee beans by sample roasting. Then the brew samples are evaluated by coffee cupping. This is the practice of observing the tastes and aromas of the brewed coffee. Then the beans are roasted in small batches at the time orders are placed by individual coffee houses. (Fun Fact: Coffee cupping procedure involves deeply sniffing the coffee, then loudly slurping it so it spreads to the back of the tongue and then spitting it out into a spittoon!)

**Verena Street Coffee Company** – Was started in Dubuque, IA in December 2010. The company only buys Arabica beans that are grown at higher altitudes and generally make a smoother, better tasting coffee. The coffee beans are purchased from Rainforest Alliance Certified Farms.

Obviously there is a list of coffee beverages to choose from. Of course brewed coffee is always available but the real fun is in trying the specialties. Here are some you might not be familiar with:

**Espresso** (ehss-press-oh) – a strong, thick, syrupy coffee made by forcing nearly boiling water under pressure through tightly packed finely ground coffee beans.

**Cappuccino** (cap-poo-chee-no) – prepared with espresso, hot milk and steamed milk foam. (Fun Fact: the foam on top acts as an insulator and helps retain the heat of the espresso allowing it to stay hotter longer.)



**Breve** (Breev) – espresso made with a steamed mixture of half milk and half cream (in other words – half & half.)

**Latte** (laht-tay) – espresso and a lot of steamed milk. This drink is typically made with one part espresso to three parts milk.

**Latte Macchiato** (mak-kee-AH-toe) – this literally means "stained milk". It differs from a latte in that espresso is added to milk but it features more foam than milk and typically only a half shot of espresso is used. (Fun Fact: in a latte the emphasis is on the milk while in a latte macchiato the focus is on the coffee.)

Charlotte's Coffee House is a great place to try some trendy coffee drinks popular in big cities like Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. A couple of these are:

**The Pour Over** – boiling water is poured over fresh ground coffee that has been placed in a cone filter. The hot water creates a coffee slurry mixture that slowly drains into a mug. This is the cleanest and purest way to enjoy coffee.

**Bullet Proof Coffee** – this brew was developed and the name trademarked in 2009 by David Asprey. He got the idea after traveling to Tibet and tasting several yak-butter tea drinks. Coffee is blended with coconut oil and organic unsalted butter made from the milk of grass-fed cows. So Charlotte's gives you an opportunity to try a drink that has been all the rage since being seen on Good Morning America, Today, and The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon.

Charlotte's Coffee House is more than just coffee. The food is as delicious as it is unusual. There is a whole assortment of items for every taste. These include Toasts, Burritos, Waffles, Wraps, Paninis, Flatbreads, Soup and Salads.

**The Breakfast Chili Bowl** is chuckwagon chili topped with a scrambled egg and melted cheddar jack cheese.



The Breakfast Burrito is a tortilla stuffed with eggs, sausage or bacon, sautéed onions and peppers and your choice of mushrooms and/or tomatoes.

The Bacon and Egg Waffle is really good. A fresh made Belgian waffle is topped with scrambled egg, three cheese blend and bacon.



Margie really likes the soups and salads especially the California Green Salad made with fresh lettuce, avocado, almonds, kiwi, cucumbers and chicken topped with blue cheese. The soups vary from day to day. You might

find Chicken Tortilla, Tomato Basil, New Orleans BBQ, Broccoli Cheddar or Chicken Dumplings just to name a few.

Margie's friend Jeanette Wood usually orders the delicious Meat Lover's Flat Bread heaped with lots of sausage, bacon, chicken and pepperoni over marinara sauce and topped with cheese.

When I visit for breakfast I like to get the Breakfast Panini with egg, sausage or bacon, roasted peppers and onions and I tell

them to throw in mushrooms and tomatoes too. At lunch time I prefer the Turkey & Dressing Panini. This one has roasted turkey, Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese, sage dressing, cranberry sauce and pesto. It was supposed to be a seasonal special for Thanksgiving but so many customers kept asking for it they had to add it to the regular menu.



By the way do you know how we got to enjoy a Panini? Panini (pah-nee-nee) is the plural of the Italian word Panino or bread roll. It refers to a small Italian sandwich filled with meat and cheese or grilled vegetables and is usually toasted. In the US Panini has come to mean a slightly squished sandwich grilled in a Panini press. The press ensures melted cheese, a crisp finish and grill marks.

You will notice many of the Panini come with micro greens. These are always picked just before they are put on your plate. The fresh plants are supplied by Laura Klavitter, owner of MicroGirl in Dubuque. In addition to growing these plants for retail consumption she teaches horticulture at the Iowa State University Dubuque County Extension and Outreach Program.



Now I must tell you about the Açaí Sorbet. You order this in either a cup or bowl and you eat it as a scrumptious breakfast... or lunch... or snack... or dessert.

The Açaí (pronounced ah-sigh-ee) palm tree is cultivated for its fruit and for hearts of palm. The fruit is a small round black/purple berry containing a large seed. The seed is never eaten but the pulp is considered one of the most nutritious foods in the world because it has ten times the antioxidant power of red grapes and twice that of blueberries.

Cheryl takes pureed berries and mixes it into sorbet. She adds a zest of lemon and tops it with blueberries, bananas and strawberries and toasted granola. The granola is homemade from oatmeal, English walnuts, organic coconut, pine nuts, honey and safflower oil. If you haven't had this astounding dish you must try it but be advised you will keep coming back for more.



Charlotte's Coffee House is a great place to relax in comfortable surroundings. Come enjoy your favorite coffee or better yet experiment with some drinks you are not familiar with. Have a fresh scone, cookie or muffin. They are all baked in-house daily. Stay awhile and catch up on all your media devices. There is free Wi-Fi (username: Guest, password: wifiaccess123).

And one more thing. Drake House Vacation Rentals occupies the upper two floors of the building. Don and Cheryl built these state of the art bed and breakfast suites. The name is in honor of Don's mother whose maiden name was Drake.

There are three suites: City View, Fleur de Lis (fler-deh-leese) and The Loft. Each of these short term or extended stay rentals is fully furnished, has 2 full bathrooms, flat screen televisions and a washer and dryer. Check them out online at **DrakeHouseStay.com**. They are listed on Vacation Rentals by Owner (**vrbo.com**) and on AIR BNB (**airbnb.com**).

## CHARLOTTE'S COFFEE HOUSE

11<sup>th</sup> & White Streets, Dubuque, IA 52001

563-231-3716 • [CharlottesCoffeeHouse.com](http://CharlottesCoffeeHouse.com)

[Facebook.com/CharlottesCoffeeHouse](https://www.facebook.com/CharlottesCoffeeHouse)

**Hours:** Mon-Fri: 7 AM-5 PM; Sat: 7 AM-3 PM; Sun: 8 AM-3 PM

**Dining Style:** Coffee House

**Noise Level:** Conversational

**Recommendations:** All Coffees, Açaí Sorbet, Breakfast Burrito, Daily Soup, Chili, Bacon & Egg Waffle, California Spinach Wrap, Chicken Bacon Pesto Panini, Breakfast Panini, Turkey & Dressing Panini, Meat Lovers Flatbread, California Green Salad

**Liquor Service:** None

**Prices:** Coffee: \$1.89-\$4.99; Other Items: \$3.29-\$9.99

**Pay Options:** Cash, Debit, Local Checks, All Credit Cards

**Accessibility:** Ramp to Center Door, Restrooms

**Kids Policy:** Menu—no, Highchair—yes

**Reservations:** Yes • **Catering:** Yes • **Take Out:** Yes

**Delivery:** No • **Parking:** On street only