



LOG CABIN STEAKHOUSE

REVISITED

BY RICH BELMONT

The Log Cabin Steakhouse is the oldest and longest running restaurant in Galena, IL. It has been serving savory steaks in the same corner at Main and Perry Street since 1937. It is located inside the First State and Savings Bank that closed during the Great Depression. The bank's name is still on the building. People came from all over to enjoy delicious food at reasonable prices. A 1937 menu still hangs on the wall: Steak \$1.00, Hamburger 10¢, Fried Chicken 60¢, French Fries 15¢, Beer 10¢ and a Martini would set you back a quarter of a dollar!

Foti Rigopoulos, whose American name is Frank, purchased the Log Cabin in 1972. He was born in Kalamata, Greece, the number one olive oil producing region in Greece. When he was 17 he boarded a ship and spent three weeks crossing the Atlantic Ocean. He arrived at Ellis Island US Immigration Station in New York City. This wasn't his final destination though, because he still had to travel to Chicago. He had a new life and a new job as a dishwasher waiting for him at his Uncle's restaurant. Frank saved his money and soon brought his family over from Greece. He worked hard, learned everything there was to know about the restaurant business and finally opened his own place called the Sea Breeze in DeKalb, IL.



A few years after taking over the Log Cabin Frank brought his young sons Dino and Sam, who are named after their grandfathers, into the restaurant. Dino and Sam have virtually grown up inside the Log Cabin.

Then in 1994 they brought Tony Bardaklis into the kitchen to be their Executive Chef. Frank and Tony created a menu that combined the best dishes of a steak place with the fabulous flavors of Greek cuisine. Frank and Tony perfected the technique of blending meat juices and Greek spices and herbs into delicious marinades. Kalamata olive oil, fresh garlic, Greek sea salt, pepper, basil and lemon juice are added to these marinades.

As Dino says today the Log Cabin is a Traditional Steakhouse with a touch of Greek influence. Of course you can order your steak or chops charbroiled in classic American style. However the Greek way offers an exciting burst of flavor that's hard to describe.

Greek Style cuisine is a subtle taste. The Greeks do not eat spicy foods and they don't over season their food either. Many of their dishes are marinades and the most common Greek seasonings are:

- Kalamata Olive Oil (Elaiólad)
- Greek Oregano (Rigani)
- Lemon (Lemóni)
- Greek Sea Salt (Elati)
- Pepper (Peperi)
- Basil (Vassilikos)
- Thyme (Thymari)
- Sage (Faskomilo)
- Mint (Diosmos)
- Dill (Anitho)
- Bay Leaves (Dafnofila)
- Parsley (Maidanos)
- Cinnamon (Kanela)
- Allspice (Aromatopipéri)

Chef Bardaklis imports many of these seasonings directly from Greece. While Greek sea salt, oregano and lemon are the most used seasonings at Log Cabin a lot of fresh basil is also used not only in the cuisine but also as a garnish. In fact, you might have noticed on the sidewalk outside the restaurant there are several large pots overgrown with basil. (Fun Fact: the Greek name for Basil is Vassilikos which means "Royal". There is a Greek superstition if you keep a pot of basil at the entrance door to your house you will have good luck and much money!)

So maybe Log Cabin's success can be attributed to the basil pot, but I don't think so. I believe this restaurant is so hugely popular because of the cuisine. Everything is prepared from fresh ingredients. There are no pre-cooked items on their menu. All soups, salad dressings, marinades, shrimp cocktail dip and tartar sauce are made on the premises. All dinners are large portions and include a side salad and a fresh relish tray served in supper club style.



It's best to start off dinner at Log Cabin with a superb cocktail. Harry Holloman is an expert mixologist and has been at Log Cain over 11 years. He mixes great drinks especially the Signature Old



Fashioned made with Blaum Brothers Distilling Company's Bourbon and the Hellfyre Bloody Mary made with Blaum Brothers Hellfyre Vodka and the Galena Canning Company's World Famous Bloody Mary Mix. Both of these specialties are products of Galena.

A fine wine is a good way to compliment you dinner, too. There is a nice selection to choose from and since I am in a Greek Steakhouse I like to order a nice Greek wine. The wine list changes every 6 months.



For starters I recommend the Flaming Saganaki. Kasseri (kuh-SEHR-ee) cheese is lightly breaded, fried in olive oil and flamed at your table with brandy. Be sure to yell out the traditional OPA! In case you wondering this loosely translates from the Greek as Hooray!

Another wonderful appetizer is the Shrimp Cocktail consisting of four chilled jumbo Texas Gulf Tiger Shrimp served with a delicious homemade shrimp cocktail sauce.



I suggest you upgrade you salad to the Greek version. Crisp lettuce is topped with onions, green peppers, tomatoes, Kalamata olives, sliced hardboiled egg and Feta cheese. Order it with or without anchovies.

Log Cabin is a premier steakhouse. The beef is supplied by Allen Brothers in Chicago. Allen Brothers is the country's leading steak purveyor for over 120 years. It is famous for beef exceptional in color, tenderness, rich marbling and the ultimate in juiciness and sweet beefy flavor.

The beef purchased by Log Cabin is all USDA Prime Grade wet aged by Allen Brothers for 30 days. Dino ages it another 10 days and hand-cuts it on a huge meat-saw. (Fun Fact: the USDA defines 8 quality levels graded according to 3 factors: tenderness, juiciness and flavor. Prime Grade is the top ranked and is not usually found in supermarkets. It is produced from young well-fed cattle, has abundant marbling and is mostly sold in restaurants and hotels).

The steaks are all flame broiled and big! The Filet Mignon, Ribeye and New York cut are all a full pound. The tender and dual flavored T-Bone is a pound and a half. Steak connoisseurs order the Porterhouse. This house specialty is two pounds of delicious, savory beef.



The Prime Rib is slow roasted for 5 to 6 hours. It is cooked in special ovens that are used only for this purpose and marinated in a house secret seasonings. The au jus is made from

the bones. The Prime Rib is a good deal Monday through Thursdays. On those nights a smaller cut (12 oz.) is \$9.00 off the regular week-end price!

The Shish-Kabobs are very popular. Prime Rib tips are marinated for 48 hours in lemon juice and Greek seasonings. Then they are skewered and separated by fresh tomatoes, red onions, red and green peppers and placed on the char broiler.

When you are not in the mood for beef you can choose Double Thick Pork Chops, Famous Greek Chicken, Lamb Chops and other Log Cabin Favorites.



Margie loves the Greek Chicken so much she dreams about it. It is made according to an old Rigopoulos Family recipe. A half chicken is first charbroiled then slow cooked in the oven with white wine, Greek olive oil blend, lemon juice and Greek oregano.

If you like lamb you are in for a real treat. You are served four chops that are four ounces each. You get a full pound of charbroiled lamb marinated in Greek blend served with mint jelly. These chops are so delicious I dare you to resist picking up the bones with your fingers!

The Log Cabin is also a great seafood restaurant. Fish is delivered fresh three times a week. The most popular items right now are:

Alaskan King Crab Legs – succulent and easy to eat in their own split shells

Scallops – Greek style is definitely recommended

Fried Shrimp – Fan-tail shrimp are hand-peeled and hand battered with a special homemade coating

Broiled Whole Farm Raised Catfish – order it Greek style and it will come to you standing up on a plate

Lobster Tails – these are seasonal so are not always available. The lobster meat is removed from the shell, placed in an oven and sautéed with white wine and covered with lettuce leaves to hold in the moisture



After you have had a wonderful meal you will definitely want to top off with a scrumptious dessert. On a recent visit our most gracious server, Sergio Cordero, presented us with a tray including Chocolate Fudge Cake, Baklava, New York

Style or Turtle Sundae Cheesecake. And then there are the truly awesome Ice Cream Drinks: Grasshopper, Brandy Alexander, Pink Squirrel, Charlie Brown and Golden Cadillac. These impressive cocktails are made at the bar with four scoops of ice cream and are brought to your table swirling in blue flames.

Private parties are really very special occasions when held at the Log Cabin. Up to 200 people can dine on dinners you choose from a full menu. The most popular special event dinner is the Chateaubriand. These are small roasts extraordinarily cut from the center of the beef tenderloin. They are oven roasted very carefully to avoid overcooking and are served with Greek potatoes. Even Vicomte de Chateaubriand would be pleased with these roasts!

When you are planning a great party keep in mind Log Cabin has an 18 passenger executive limo bus available. They offer a flexible schedule, professional service and reasonable rates.

When you enter Log Cabin you will see bottles of Rigopoulos Grove Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil. This is the oil used in all of Log Cabin's famous recipes. The Rigopoulos Kalamata Olive Grove has been in the Rigopoulos family for decades and is operated by Dino's uncle. He produces oil that has a full-bodied complex flavor made from handpicked olives first cold-pressing in order to capture the absolute freshest and most refined flavor. It is 100% Extra Virgin Oil rated excellent in taste and color and tested to be low in acidity.

Rigopoulos Olive Oil was first imported into the USA in 2015 and in that year 4500 bottles were sold. It is available in the restaurant and at many local retail stores including Hy-Vee Supermarkets.

There is another reason Log Cabin is so successful, basil pots notwithstanding. Dino has said many times "My dad taught Sam and I to take care of our customers and always treat them like family". This was certainly in evidence when on a recent visit I spilled a full glass of wine all over Margie. Our most gracious server, Mia Maurer, immediately mopped the spill and replaced my glass of wine for free. Here was solid evidence of the meaning of the well-known Rigopoulos Family Quote: "The name may get you in the door of Log Cabin but the quality of the experience will bring you back again".

LOG CABIN STEAKHOUSE

201 N. MAIN ST., GALENA, IL 61036
815-777-0393 • LOGCABINGALENA.COM

Hours: Dinner: 4 PM–9:30 PM 7 days a week

Dining Style: Casual, attentive service

Noise Level: Conversational

Recommendations: Saganaki; Shrimp Cocktail; Greek Salad; Porterhouse, T-Bone and New York Cut Steaks; Prime Rib; Lamb Chops; Greek Chicken; Shish-Kabob; Alaskan King Crab Legs; Scallops; Fried Shrimp; Seafood Jamboree; Greek Style Catfish; Ice Cream Drinks
Liquor Service: Full Bar: Only bottled beer; Nice selection of Greek Wines. Awesome Specialty Ice Cream Drinks.

Price: Appetizers: \$6.95 to \$8.95;

Entrees: \$9.95 to \$51.95

Pay Options: Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards. No Checks.

Accessibility: Front Door and Restrooms.

Kids Policy: No Menu-ask Server for custom meals.

High chairs & boosters

Reservations: Highly recommended—by telephone only

Catering: Yes. In House Only • **Take Out:** Yes

Delivery: No • **Parking:** On Street and Log Cabin Private Lot on N. Commerce St.