

MULGREW'S TAVERN & LIQUOR STORE

BY RICH BELMONT



A tavern and liquor store that has been in the same location and operated by the same family for 93 years must be doing something right.

In 1921 William (Old Bill) Mulgrew opened a grocery store on Sinsinawa Avenue in East Dubuque, IL. You could buy sandwiches in the back of the store but you could not buy liquor. It was the Prohibition Era and the sale of alcoholic beverages was prohibited. On December 5, 1933 the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified repealing the 18th Amendment thus ending Prohibition. Soon thereafter Old Bill started stocking the first bottles of liquor that could be legally sold in East Dubuque.

It wasn't long before the little grocery store turned into a well know tavern. Back in the day it was considered a fine dining establishment. The bartenders wore tuxedo jackets and the waitresses had on matching uniforms.

In 1957 Eddie Mulgrew, Old Bill's son, took over the tavern and six years later turned it over to his nephew Dallas Mulgrew. He continued to develop the bar into a friendly place where you could meet friends and munch on some good food. In 1978 Dallas turned the bar right next door to Mulgrew's Tavern into a liquor store. Today the store is open the same hours as the tavern: 7 am to 3:30 am.

In 2004 Dallas turned the business over to his daughter Dalene Temperley (she prefers to be called "Toots"). She literally grew up in the bar business. She lived with her mom and dad and four siblings in an apartment over the tavern. When she was 15 she started behind the bar working the 11 pm to close shift on weekends. After graduating from high school she started making the already famous chili from the secret recipe her great uncle Eddie developed in the 1950's. Now she has been running the entire operation for 41 years! And just so you know: 41 years ago it was legal for a 15-year-old to tend bar!



Her daughter, Terissa Temperley, is now following in her footsteps and is learning the business from her mom. She is so grateful mom is willing to teach her all aspects of the operation one step at a time the same way Toots learned from her dad. Even Terissa's son,

Carson, who is only three years old, is already taking an interest. Who knows? Maybe he will be the sixth generation owner!

Mulgrew's is open for breakfast, lunch, dinner and late night snacks. You can order food right up until closing time at 3:30 in the morning.

Breakfast is served daily 7 am till 11 am and till noon on Sunday. It's surprising to see all the people who show up for the Standard which is 2 eggs, hashbrowns, choice of bacon, sausage or ham, and toast. Or they order a 3 Egg Omelet usually covered in cheddar cheese or French Toast, or Buttermilk Pancakes or a Breakfast Burrito.



Mulgrew's is famous for its hot dogs. After all, it is the Home of the World Famous Foot Long Chili Dog. Of course it's famous! Regular customers come in several times a week just to satisfy their chili dog cravings. The hot dog is steamed and then covered with the homemade chili. It adds just the right flavor to compliment the hot dog. Some people think the chili has Tabasco sauce in it but it doesn't and it isn't very spicy. Most people like to add shredded American cheese and chopped onions. I like mine spicy so I also ask for jalapeño peppers. And then to round out the flavors I put on some homemade Mulgrew's hot beer mustard.

All Mulgrew's sandwiches are sold a la carte. However, all of the items listed under appetizers are available as sides. So you can order French Fries, Jalapeño Poppers, Onion Rings, Mini Tacos, Pickle Chips and many more goodies to accompany your sandwich. My tasting team ordered the Mulgrew Sampler: a huge pile of all these different teasers.



There are several burger options to try. You might like the Mulgrew Regular Burger or the Mushroom Swiss, the Jalapeño Swiss, Bacon Cheese or Chili Cheese Burger. Then there are five potato options to keep your burger from getting lonely: French Fries, Curly Fries, Sweet Potato, Chili Cheese Fries or the slightly unusual Potato Teasers. These are potato puffs with cheese mixed in.

The Bratwurst Burger is a very tasty bratwurst patty on a bun. The Pork Tenderloin is a satisfying sandwich and the Ham Sandwiches, either with American or Swiss cheese, are quite flavorful because an expensive smoked pit ham is used.



My favorite lunch is the French Dip. It is a flat roast seasoned and roasted in-house and it is served with a very good au jus on the side. This roast has a beefy flavor more like a pot roast. It comes on garlic cheese bread which further enhances the flavor.

Friday night all-you-can-eat Fish Fries featuring Alaska Pollock are a big hit with the locals. They happen the second Friday of each month from October through February 13th. Then they are every Friday night during the Lenten season.

Dinners are so satisfying because it is impossible to eat one of them and still be hungry. Choose Chicken Strips, Whole Catfish, Alaskan Pollock or 21 piece Shrimp Dinners. They include fries, coleslaw and a roll.



The Broasted Chicken is my 3rd favorite meal (after Chili Dog and French Dip). It is hand breaded and cooked in a pressurized fryer. In fact, Broasted Chicken to Go is the most popular carry-out dinner.

Perhaps the secret to Mulgrew's Tavern & Liquor Store's longevity is simply it is a fun place to visit. The State of Illinois does not allow happy hour. So lucky for us when Mulgrew's offers specials like One Dollar Beer nights those specials must be available all day and night. And now there are 5 Illinois video gaming machines with cash payouts. Starting the week of Thanksgiving they will continue their tradition of serving their fabulous Tom & Jerry drinks. The Mulgrew's version of this Christmas libation is a house specialty that is hugely popular. A specially seasoned egg white batter is mixed with boiling hot water that causes the batter to froth. Then rum, brandy and a few other holiday ingredients are added in and fresh ground nutmeg is sprinkled on top.

When you are visiting take a few minutes to check out the vast collection of photos on the wall opposite the bar. They offer you an insight into 93 years of Mulgrew's extraordinary history!

MULGREW'S TAVERN & LIQUOR STORE
240 Sinsinawa Ave., East Dubuque, IL 61025
815-747-3845 • Facebook.com/mulgrews

Hours: Bar: 7 AM-3:30 AM Daily
Kitchen: Breakfast: Mon-Sat: 7 AM-11AM;
Sun 7 AM-12 PM; Lunch/Dinner: 7 AM-3:30 AM Daily

Dining Style: Come as you are

Noise Level: Conversational

Recommendations: The Standard Breakfast; 3 Egg Omelets; Mulgrew Sampler; Foot Long Chili Dogs; Fried Chicken; Bacon Cheese Burger; Pork Tenderloin, Brat Burger; French Dip; Chili; Alaskan Pollock

Liquor Service: Full Bar • **Prices:** \$3.00-\$9.50

Pay Options: Cash, Debit, Visa, MasterCard, Discover, ATM on Premises

Accessibility: Front Door through Liquor Store; Restrooms

Kids Policy: Menu; High Chairs; Boosters

Reservations: No • **Catering:** No

Take Out: Yes • **Delivery:** No

Parking: On Street, Front & Back Entrances