

SPORTSTERS PUB-N-GRUB

BY RICH BELMONT

If you like eating at places where you get lots of food for little money you need to know about a little bar called Sportsters Pub-N-Grub. It's at the corner of Central Avenue and 26th Street in Dubuque. You might want to write this down because the food is not only inexpensive it's really good!

The building is very old. The cupola over the front door and the tin ceiling might give you a clue to how old. We know for sure it has been a bar since 1938. For many years it was known as A & B Tap and then around 2010 it became The Screaming Eagle Bar.



Roger McIntyre and his sister Renee Martin purchased the building in early 2014. They opened as Sportsters Pub-N-Grub in April of that year. The name was chosen by Renee because she is the owner and rider of a Harley-Davidson Sportster motorcycle.

The bar is a fun place. There are some gaming machines and a game room with pool table, darts and foosball. (Fun Facts: Foosball is the American corruption of the German word Fussball for soccer and is pronounced the same way. Fussball literally means "foot ball." The game is played all over the world. Every week 1.9 million people play a game of foosball just in the United States).

Right from the start Sportsters was destined to be more about delicious food and less about beer, although there is plenty of that too. The owners invested another \$80,000 to put an addition on the building and install a brand new spacious modern kitchen. The kitchen opened in December, 2014 and full service was established in August, 2015.

The kitchen operates every day from 6:00 am to 11:00 pm and appetizers are available until 1:00 am.

The menu includes breakfast, burgers, pizza and sandwiches. Off-menu Daily Special Dinners are served Monday through Friday. Everything is available all day. Want a pizza for breakfast? No problem. Want an omelet for dinner? Coming right up!

The food is outstanding because Roger and Renee are both talented and experienced cooks. Roger has been cooking since he was 16. He cooked in several kitchens including Clarke College (now University), Dubuque Inn, Cardinal Lounge in Dyersville, Thunder Hills Country Club in Peosta and he was at Mario's in Dubuque for 13 years.

Renee was a cook at Mount Carmel in Dubuque for over 20 years. She was the Head Chef the last 14 years of her tenure there.



When you are having an attack of the munchies Sportsters is a good place to be. There are 14 finger foods to choose from or you can order a Garbage Basket assortment of popular favorites or a Veggie Basket assortment including Breaded Green

Beans, Breaded Cauliflower and Cheese, Breaded Buttered Mushrooms, Breaded Dill Spears, Mozzarella Sticks, Cheese Nuggets, Onion Rings, Waffle Fries and French Fries.

The Pizzas are good too. They are prepared from scratch and come in 7, 12 and 16 inch sizes to satisfy every appetite. You can choose your own toppings or pick from a list of specialty pizzas. Some of them are quite unusual like:

- Buffalo Chicken - topped with jalapeño peppers
- Philly Steak - covered with steak, grilled peppers and onions
- Mac Attack - seasoned hamburger, cheese, lettuce, onion, pickles relish and thousand island dressing
- Breakfast - scrambled eggs, hash browns, sausage gravy and bacon



↑ Ultra Classic Breakfast



The burgers are one third pound beef patties. They are cooked on a char broiler. My favorite burger is covered with green olives and Swiss cheese but I also like the one with grilled mushrooms and Swiss. Big eaters can order half pounders.

All the sandwiches are good but in my opinion some of them are really impressive. For instance:

- BLT - has six slices of bacon served on Texas toast
- Reuben - whole corned beef briskets are cooked in house. Thin slices are topped with sauerkraut, Swiss cheese and Thousand Island dressing on grilled marble rye



- Homewrecker - a tremendous 13 inch long, half pound hot dog is charbroiled and then covered with a copious amount of chili, cheddar cheese and onions. The chili is made by Renee and it is so good she needs to enter it in the next chili cook-off.
- Pork Tenderloin - Roger slices pork loin, seasons, pounds it thin. Then it is lightly dusted and fried.



- Steak Sandwich - I love this one! A nice size top sirloin is charbroiled then topped with grilled onions and mushrooms and cheese (American, Swiss or Pepper Jack).



- Chicken Wrap - the menu says the tortilla is stuffed. It should say it is overstuffed! With chicken, bacon, lettuce, tomato, onion and ranch dressing.



Breakfasts are not only good they are a good deal. I plan on being a frequent diner for the Sportster's Special of 2 eggs, sausage patties or links, or ham or bacon, with hash browns and toast. Or perhaps I'll be getting the Sirloin Steak and Eggs and when I'm really hungry I'll order the Ultra Classic. This is a huge pile of hash browns, bacon, sausage, ham, onions, peppers, mushrooms, sausage gravy all topped off with two eggs. My tasting team member Kristina usually can eat as much as me but not with this breakfast. She had to take more than half of it home!

I am sure by now you have figured out Sportsters is an unassuming little bar that just happens to serve spectacular food. And I haven't even described the best part yet—the Daily Specials.



The Monday Daily Special is always a Panzerotti. You order this deep-fried pizza dough turnover stuffed with your favorite pizza toppings. Each one is made to order. The Friday Daily Special is always Fried Shrimp or Pollock and French Fries.

On the other 3 weekdays the Specials are whatever Roger and Renee feel like making. So you can just show up and be pleasantly surprised or you can look up each week's Daily Specials in the Dubuque Advertiser. I have been keeping a list of these great dinners and have recorded 24 of them so far. I have enjoyed a number of them including:

- Meatball Parmesan - three delicious freshly made all beef meatballs placed on a roll and covered with marinara sauce and pizza cheese.
- Open Faced Turkey - whole turkeys are roasted and sliced in preparation for this dinner.
- Fried Chicken & Party Potatoes - fried chicken served with mashed potatoes mixed with sour cream, ranch dressing and cheddar cheese. Fried chicken is really good and is currently only served as a Daily Special and is not on the menu. Not yet anyway.

- Open Faced Beef & Mash Potatoes - bottom round flats are oven roasted and sliced for this special. The mashed potatoes are splendid because they are made the old fashioned way.



- Chicken Alfredo & Garlic Bread - grilled chicken breast with broccoli mixed with an Alfredo sauce over egg noodles.



- Country Fried Steak & Mashed Potatoes - tender steak is breaded and covered with white gravy.



- Italian Sausage Grinder - made from scratch ground pork and Roger's own blend of seasonings.

Sportsters Pub-N-Grub is a very unusual place. It is one third neighborhood bar, one third biker bar and one third casual restaurant. It's also one half terrific food (they call it Grub!) and one half friendly atmosphere!

SPORTSTERS PUB-N-GRUB

2600 Central Avenue, Dubuque, IA • 563-582-6822

Hours: 6 AM-2 AM Daily

Kitchen: Sun-Thu: 6 AM-11 PM; Fri-Sat: 6 AM-1 AM

Dining Style: Come as you are

Noise Level: Comfortable

Recommendations: Garbage or Veggie Basket; Pizza; Burgers; Philly Steak or Chicken; Homewrecker Hot Dog; Pork Tenderloin; Steak Sandwich; All Daily Specials; Ultra Classic Breakfast; Steak and Eggs; Sportsters Breakfast

Liquor Service: Full Bar, All Beer in Cans or Bottles

Price Range: \$2.95-\$24.95

Pay Options: Cash, Check, Debit, Discover, MasterCard, Visa, AMEX. ATM on premises

Accessibility: Ramp to Front Door

Kids Policy: No Menu; No High Chairs; No Boosters

Reservations: Yes • **Catering:** No

Take Out: Yes • **Delivery:** No

Parking: On Street