

## STONE CLIFF WINERY

BY RICH BELMONT

Nan and Bob Smith were living in Colorado when they made the decision to move to Nan's hometown of Dubuque. They purchased the Stone Cliff Farm near Durango, Iowa. At first they planned to plant typical Iowa crops but soon discovered they were really interested in growing grapes. They planted their vineyard in 1995. Bob set to work building a winery business. Nan studied the art of producing wine in order to become a commercial winemaker. They bottled their first wine in 2001.



In the summer of 2007 Stone Cliff Winery moved its winemaking facility and tasting center to the Dubuque Star Brewery. The Brewery began producing Dubuque Star Beer in 1898. It closed during prohibition and reopened in 1933. In the 1970's Pickett's Premium Beer

was brewed there and Rhomberg Beer was produced from 1980 to 1985. After that year a few more attempts were made to keep the brewery operating but it was not to be. The Brewery closed for good in 1999.



So we are fortunate Bob and Nan Smith had the vision to see the building could still be used for the production of alcoholic beverages, only this time wine instead of beer!

Today, Stone Cliff Winery uses the grapes from their vineyard plus a variety of local, California and Washington State grapes that are blended to create award winning wines. Stone Cliff produces over 200,000 bottles of wine per year at the Star Brewery.

The wines available at this time are in order of popularity: Strawberry Rhubarb, Sweet Raspberry, Moscato, Purple Cow, Red Fox, Sweet Cranberry, White Zinfandel, Jazzberry (in bottles shaped like musical instruments), Appleberry, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Chardonnay.



### Fun Facts:

- There are over 300 vineyards and 100 wineries in Iowa
- Wild grapevines in Iowa are either male or female. Male plants do not bear grapes
- The typical grape harvest season is from early August through mid-October
- One ton of Iowa grapes will produce 150 gallons of wine which is equal to 750 bottles
- It takes approximately 500 grapes to produce a standard 750 ml bottle of Iowa wine
- You can order a free Iowa Wine and Beer Directory from the Iowa Wine & Beer Promotion website:

[www.IowaWineandBeer.com](http://www.IowaWineandBeer.com)



Stone Cliff at the Star Brewery is so much more than a winemaking facility. It is a wine tasting bar, a covered patio and an outdoor wine garden. It also has banquet rooms and a gift shop.

It's a neat place to visit and try some of Stone Cliff's wines or beer if you prefer. You can admire the Dubuque Shot Tower next door and occasionally watch a train crossing the Mississippi River just a few feet away. It is a relaxing atmosphere with no loud music or televisions blaring.



The wine bar and tasting room is managed by Jodi Bryson. She has been at Stone Cliff for seven years and is an experienced event and wedding planner.

The Tasting Room serves really good lunches Monday through Friday and appetizers are available the rest of the time. They are the creations of a young and talented Chef. She is Molly McCullough and she holds a degree in Culinary Arts from Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, IA.

The wine bar is open every day so you can enjoy approximately 12 different wines, six microbrews or a variety of domestic beers including 7 on tap. There are specialties like Hard Stone Cider and Sangria and seasonal specialties including Hot Apple Cider in the fall.



I recommend you sample different wines by ordering a Wine Flight. You get 5 different tasting pours of your choice plus an additional pour of the Wine of the Month all for \$5.00. For \$2.00 more you receive an engraved Stone Cliff wine glass

Fun Fact: Ever wonder why they call it a Wine Flight? A Flight is a grouping of similar objects like a flight of stairs or a flight of ducks. The word flight has evolved so it now also refers to a group of small samples like small pours of wine or beer.

Lunch at Stone Cliff is delicious and extraordinary. The soups are homemade. I recently had a wonderful Zuppa Toscana. It was a gluten-free soup made with half mild and half spicy Italian sausage, potatoes, red bell peppers, chicken stock, garlic and onion, spinach and parmesan cheese. On another day I found the Beer Cheese Soup to be very tasty. It was made from a roux and milk base, chicken stock, sharp cheddar cheese, and Slingshot Dunkel beer from Backpocket Brewing in Coralville, IA.

The salads are truly refreshing. The Spring Fling is a bowl of crispy mixed greens, fresh cucumbers, Mandarin oranges, candied pecans, 7 year aged white cheddar and an Orange Ginger Vinaigrette. The dressing is made from orange glaze, oil, orange juice and orange zest. Margie enjoyed the Greek Salad with romaine lettuce, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, red onion, green and Kalamata olives, feta cheese with Greek dressing.

There are 3 delicious Flatbreads:

- 3 Meat Italian – crumbled mild Italian sausage, pepperoni, bacon and a melted 3 cheese blend. The blend is from cheddar, provolone and mozzarella
- The Californian – caramelized onion, goat cheese, candied pecans, basil and balsamic glaze
- The Midwestern – hand pulled pork with red onion, 3 cheese blend and BBQ sauce



The current menu contains 5 sandwiches. They are all very tasty:

- Grilled Cheese – three cheeses (Molly likes to use 3 cheese in many of her creations) Gruyere, mild white
- Turkey & Cranberry – turkey, pecan-smoked bacon, spinach, tomato and Swiss cheese with a homemade cranberry sauce. The sauce is made from cranberry jelly, dried cranberries, thyme and lemon juice.
- The Picnic – pulled pork with sweet pepper slaw
- White Cheddar Burger – a quarter pound steak patty, melted white cheddar, topped with homemade aioli on a soft pretzel roll
- Chicken Bruschetta – grilled chicken, Roma tomatoes, garlic, basil, provolone and sweet pepper aioli

On some days Chef Molly goes to market so you might find a lunch special that is not on the menu. Recent examples of Molly's culinary artistry:

- Pork Carnitas – seasoned pork on corn tortillas with queso fresco and pico de gallo
- Jalapeño Pepper Burger – a burger on a cream cheese spread with jalapeños, bacon and cheddar

When you visit for lunch be sure to ask for your punch card. You buy six lunches and get one free. Tuesday is Double Punch Day!



Delicious appetizers are available all day including during the lunch hours. The current appetizer menu includes:

- Flat Bread Hummus – crispy flatbread slices with 3 different hummus dips: Original Chickpea, Basil Pesto and Roasted Red Pepper
- Tuscan Style Pizzas – square, thin, crispy flatbread type pizzas: the current choices are cheese, pepperoni, sausage, meat lovers, bruschetta and chicken margarita
- Assorted Cheese, Salami and Cracker Board – The cheese selections change frequently. On my last visit they were Smoked Gouda, Sharp Cheddar and Espresso
- Mozzarella Sticks
- Chicken Salad Sliders
- Bruschetta
- Roasted & salted mixed nuts
- Eli's Cheesecake



Many of the appetizers and lunch appetizers can be prepared gluten-free or vegetarian. Just consult with your server to discuss your options.

Did I mention Stone Cliff Winery is a fun place to hang out? Here is a partial list of their entertainment options:

Happy Hour – Tuesday through Friday, 4 pm to 6 pm. There is a \$1.00 off draft beer and wine and \$2.00 off appetizers

Live Music – Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 7 pm to 11 pm; Sunday – spring through September, 4 pm to 7 pm; October through April, 3 pm to 6 pm. The music calendar is on the Stone Cliff website.

Karaoke – Becky McMahon Karaoke is on most Thursdays and some Sundays. If you are lucky like I was you will get there early and hear Katie McFarland. She is a talented singer and she has a beautiful voice!

Mystery Dinner Theater – One Sunday a month a four course dinner including wine or beverage of your choice is served. Most of the presentations involve a night of mystery and intrigue in the wild and romantic era of the roaring 20's. Buzz Nessman, the owner of Dubuque's famous Fish Fly Club has just been murdered. Enjoy your dinner while Jack Slickman, the bumbling detective tries to figure out who done it? There are other mysteries for Valentine's Day and Saint Patty's Day, Christmas and a summer high school reunion. The Murder Mystery can also be staged for private groups of 25 or more guests. Contact Jodi to arrange a private performance for Christmas parties, family reunions and company team-building workshops.

Stone Cliff is also a neat place to hold a private party or mid-week business meeting. The unique surroundings insure a memorable experience. A complete menu is available and up to 200 guests can be accommodated inside and up to 600 outside under a festive tent. You can reserve a date for corporate dinners, family reunions, birthdays, and other special occasions. Stone Cliff specializes in weddings, rehearsal dinners and receptions. Jodi is an expert one-stop wedding planner and can help with everything you need to celebrate your special day.

## STONE CLIFF WINERY

600 STAR BREWERY DRIVE, DUBUQUE, IA 52001  
563-583-6100  
STONECLIFFWINERY.COM  
FACEBOOK.COM/STONECLIFFWINERY

**Hours:** Sun-Wed: 11 AM-8 PM; Thu-Sat: 11 AM-11 PM; Mon-Fri Lunch: 11 AM-2 PM

**Dining Style:** Come as you are

**Noise Level:** Conversational

**Recommendations:** Soup of the Day; Greek Salad, Flatbreads; Grilled Cheese; Turkey & Cranberry; The Picnic; White Cheddar Burger; Chicken Bruschetta; Flat Bread & Hummus; Tuscan Style Pizza; Chicken Salad Sliders; Cheese Board; Cheesecakes

**Liquor Service:** Wine and Beer

**Bar Specialties:** Sangria

**Prices:** \$3-\$15

**Pay Options:** Cash, Debit, Discover, MasterCard, Visa, Checks

**Accessibility:** Front Door to Star Brewery

**Kids Policy:** Ask server for kid's plates, High chairs, Boosters

**Reservations:** Call ahead • **Catering:** No

**Delivery:** No • **Parking:** Star Brewery Private Lot