



YARDARM RIVERFRONT BAR & GRILL AT THE DUBUQUE MARINA

BY RICH BELMONT

Boaters know very well food served at marinas is usually ok but not great. So you might be surprised to hear Yardarm Riverfront Bar & Grill is a really good restaurant that just happens to be in the Dubuque Marina.

The current owners of the marina purchased it just before the 2015 boating season. They operated it just as it was for that season and then in November 2015 they began a major overhaul. Ryan and Jamie Becker, Steve and Tracy Launspach and Peter Ludwig are the owners. They upgraded the dock facilities and marina amenities while at the same time working on turning the Yardarm Riverfront Bar & Grill into a destination restaurant.

They completely renovated and installed three new bars, revamped the kitchen making it three times larger than the original, installed new LED lighting, added a new patio and deck, purchased new furniture and expanded and remodeled the restrooms.

They opened the new bar and restaurant May 5, 2016 after bringing on board experienced and talented managers and a whole new crew of cooks and servers.

Jamie Becker is not only one of the owners of the marina; she is also the Business Manager. As a boater at the Dubuque Marina for many years she is an expert in all aspects of marina operations.

Bryan Conklin is the General Manager. He has an extensive background in the food service industry. At 16 he was the youngest manager in the entire Pizza Hut chain. He was the daytime manager at Bricktown Brewery and kitchen manager at Hudson's Bar & Grill both formerly in Dubuque. He was a manager at Papa John's Pizza in Dubuque, worked as a cook on a Mississippi River towboat and at Water Street Market in Bellevue.

Alyssa Ludwig is the Bar Manager. She spends her winters in Fargo, ND where she is a bartender at Bulldog Tap. When at the Yardarm Alyssa applies her expertise to professional development of the Yardarm staff. This is a very important position because in 2015 there were 20 employees and now there are 56!



You will most likely think Yardarm is a clever name for a restaurant. But do you know what a yardarm is? To know the answer you must understand a few nautical terms from the days of the great sailing ships. A spar is a wooden or metal pole used to carry or support a sail. A yard is a horizontal tapering spar attached to a ship's mast used to spread the top or head of a square sail. The Yardarm is either end of the yard of a square-rigged ship.

(Fun Fact: In the days of the sailing ships sailors were given daily rations of rum, called tots, for two reasons. First, drinking beverages with alcohol was safer than drinking stagnant water and second the rum was mixed with lime or lemon to help prevent scurvy caused by a Vitamin C deficiency).

Yardarm is actually a good name for a bar. The first Tot of the day was distributed to the sailors when the sun had risen far enough up in the sky so as to appear it was above the topmost yardarm. In the summer in the North Atlantic this would have been approximately 11 o'clock in the morning. Thus, when the "Sun is Over the Yardarm" signals the customary and acceptable time to begin consuming alcoholic beverages.

Yardarm Riverfront Bar & Grill is a fun place to visit either with or without a boat. So many people go there just to hang out. Jamie Becker estimates the average length of stay is four to six hours including lunch, dinner and live music on week-ends.



ALYSSA LUDWIG, BRYAN CONKLIN, AND JAMIE BECKER



To begin with there are three bars:

Main Inside Bar – a great place to sit with friends to talk and watch TV. There are 13 big screen TVs on the premises. This also houses an indoor full service restaurant and is the only bar to serve on glassware.

Band Bar – comfortable, heated seating area for listening to great music every Friday and Saturday night and most Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons.

Tiki Bar – an outdoor bar on the patio with 24 seats. You can watch the river from all these seats and there is even space heating to keep you comfortable on chilly evenings. This is the bar that includes the outdoor full service restaurant.

The Main Bar has 8 beers on tap and the bartenders are really good at mixing up the specialty cocktails. The signature drinks are a Bloody Mary, Watermelon Margarita and a Bob Marley. (Fun Fact: The Yardarm's adaptation of the Bob Marley is made with Malibu Coconut Rum, and then a separate layer of each of the following liquors: Melon Liqueur, Bacardi Limón, and Peachtree Schnapps. Then it is topped off with pineapple juice and a splash of cranberry juice. The colors represent the red, green and yellow of the flag of the Rastafari).



There is also a neat fire pit, a late night menu, a Dockside Express Menu featuring quick minimum- waiting meals and free Wi-Fi (password: guest123).

Yardarm is family friendly, too. There are several items on the kids menu all including soda or milk and all are just \$4.95.

The Yardarm menu offers a large assortment of excellent appetizers, salads, wraps, burgers, sandwiches and pizza all made from the highest quality ingredients.

For starters, I highly recommend the Cheese Curds. Wisconsin White Cheddar Curds are so lightly battered the coating does not overwhelm the cheese flavor. They are served with a wonderful Red & Black Raspberry Sauce.



The Chicken & Bacon Nachos are a terrific starter for a crowd. Fresh Tortilla Chips are totally covered with Chicken grilled in the kitchen, Bacon, Jalapeños, Black Olives and Onion covered with White Queso Cheese.

An appetizer of Jumbo Chicken Wings includes eight wings battered in-house and tossed in one of four sauces. The Jumbo Shrimp features six seasoned jumbo shrimp either breaded or grilled on skewers with a side of Cocktail or Boom Boom Hot Sauce.



The Wraps are all first rate because they are mostly filled with chicken or shrimp and lettuce not so much. The Chicken Bacon Ranch Wrap is full of complimentary flavors. A twelve inch tortilla is filled with Grilled Chicken, thick cut Cherrywood Smoked Bacon, a little lettuce and tomato and homemade Ranch Dressing.



The Burgers are made with a Top Sirloin Brisket Ground Beef. Two of my tasting partners enjoyed the Gourmet Mushroom & Swiss Burger immensely. The burger is topped with freshly Sliced Mushrooms, Swiss cheese and a Horseradish Spread. I'm told the most popular burger is the Fire Boat. It is topped with

Pepper Jack Cheese, Cherrywood Smoked Bacon, Jalapeños, Hot Sauce and White Queso Cheese.

The Sweet Potato Burger is a vegan's dream come true. Sweet potato is mixed with Rosemary and made into a patty by hand. Then it is topped with choice of cheese and placed in a potato bun.

On one of my recent visits I saw several people sitting together and they were all eating Fish & Chips or Fish Tacos. The Fish & Chips were Battered Cod Loin simply served with Tartar Sauce. The Tacos were Battered Cod, served with Spicy Boom Boom Sauce and Coleslaw in three Flour Tortillas. Every one of those people said they were excellent and a couple of them said they were the best cod pieces they ever had.

Some of the sandwiches are real standouts including:

Po Boy – Breaded Shrimp topped with spicy Boom Boom Coleslaw mix on a French Hoagie Roll.

Cuban Sandwich – Shaved Honey Smoked Ham, Pulled Pork, Swiss cheese, Pickles and Mustard on Cuban Bread.

Italian Beef – Sliced Ribeye, Giardiniera and Provolone Cheese on a Hoagie Bun.

With all of the experience Bryan has had working in pizza places it stands to reason he would be serving pizza, right?



The current menu includes Build Your Own Pizza from a list of 10 toppings. The River Philly Pizza is made with Queso Cheese, Grilled Philly Meat, Caramelized Peppers, Onions and a Signature Cheese Blend. Jamie's favorite is the very popular Fully Loaded Pizza topped

with Bacon, Beef, Chicken, Pepporoni, Sausage, Black Olives, Green Olives, Jalapeños and Onions.

These pizzas are baked in a stone deck pizza oven for an evenly cooked crust. And remember I said only the highest quality ingredients are used! Well, these pizza are made from Bacio's Premium Pizza Cheese. Bacio's is crafted with Premium Grade A Milk with a signature kiss of Buffalo Milk resulting in a smooth, velvety, creamy cheese. (Fun Fact: Bacio (bah-cho) is the Italian word for kiss. This cheese has a "kiss" of Buffalo Milk, get it?)

You don't need a boat to get to Yardarm Riverfront Bar & Grill. Take a drive down to this enjoyable spot on the Mississippi River and plan on staying for the party.

YARDARM RIVERFRONT BAR & GRILL

AT THE DUBUQUE MARINA

1201 SHIRAS AVE EXTENSION, DUBUQUE, IA 52001

563-582-3653

FACEBOOK.COM/DUBUQUEMARINAYARDARM

Hours: Bar: Tue–Thu: 11 AM–Close; Fri–Sat: 11 AM–2 AM; Sun: 11 AM–Close; Mon: Closed
Kitchen: Tue–Thu: 11 AM–9 PM; Fri–Sat: 11 AM–1 AM; Sun: 11 AM–9 PM; Mon: Closed

Dining Style: Come as you are

Noise Level: Conversational

Recommendations: Cheese Curds, Chicken & Bacon Nachos, Jumbo Chicken Wings or Jumbo Shrimp, Chicken Bacon Ranch Wrap, Gourmet Mushroom & Swiss Burger, Fire Boat Burger, Fish Tacos, Fish & Chips, The River Philly Cheese Steak, Po Boy with Chicken Fried Shrimp, Top Shelf Grilled Cheese, Pizza

Liquor Service: Full Bar

Bar Specialties: Bloody Mary, Watermelon Margarita, Bob Marley Cocktail

Prices: Sandwiches: \$7.95–\$12.95; Pizzas: \$14.95–\$19.95

Pay Options: Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards, NO Checks, ATM on premises

Accessibility: Front Entrance & Restrooms

Kids Policy: Menu–Yes, High Chair–Yes, Booster–No

Reservations: No • **Catering:** No • **Take Out:** Yes

Delivery: No • **Parking:** Large Private Lot