



Creola's

by Rich Belmont



Have you heard about Creola's? You know, it's the smokehouse on Highway 20 in East Dubuque. It's 3 miles and 5 minutes east of the Julien Dubuque Bridge or 10 miles and 11 minutes west of Galena. Well, it's still a smokehouse serving delicious BBQ but now it's so much more than that. The name comes from the blending of Southwestern dialect words CRE meaning "Warmth of the kitchen" and OLA meaning "Welcome". So Creola's means "Welcome to the warmth of the kitchen".



Jo Ann Blodgett (shown here with daughter Kylie) is the owner, manager and chef who opened Creola's in December, 2013. She is quite an accomplished and successful woman. She is originally from Dubuque and has traveled extensively and lived in the Southwest. She holds a doctorate degree in psychology and works with special needs children. She is also a mom to 4 kids herself. She also has about 22 years experience as a singer, entertainer, events and wedding planner and interior designer. She is

proficient in catering and cooking for large and small groups. Without a doubt the lady certainly knows how to cook!



Jo Ann took over the smokehouse and includes ribs, brisket, pork butt and chicken smoked over hickory and applewood on her menu. Her bill of fare also has a large assortment of unusual variations of some of her favorite Southern Style and Southwestern flavors. Many of her entrées are recipes

handed down from great grandmother to grandmother to mother to her.

The result is an opportunity for us to visit often and experience some familiar tastes in a whole new way. There are smokehouse favorites and New Orleans style Gumbo and Jambalaya. You can order fried catfish or pan seared salmon. Or perhaps, you would enjoy smoked brisket or New York strip cooked on a flat top. Then there are pasta dishes and chicken you can order smoked, fried or teriyaki style.



Trying different flavors and savoring your meals is the name of the game in this restaurant. She encourages you to experiment by choosing from a list of over 25 sauces, 16 salad dressings, 6 BBQ sauces, 7 seafood sauces and 4 mustards and all of them are made on the premises. Yet to help you differentiate between strong tastes she has installed separate fryers for meat and seafood.

A good place to start sampling these condiments is on the Chicken Wings. You can order them with the sauce already on or you can mix or match any of the sauces and ask for them on the side. Members of my tasting crew really liked the Buffalo, Blue Cheese and Chipotle sauces.

You can do the same with onion rings or cauliflower. These are fresh cut and hand battered. No way are these the frozen bar food varieties. I



especially like these with a side of Jalapeño Ranch dressing. Perhaps you are someone who enjoys squid. The Calamari is breaded with a ginger seasoned breading. Pulled Pork Egg Rolls are made by packing pulled pork from the smoker and slaw mixed with cider vinegar into hand-rolled thin flour and water dough wrappers. There is also a zesty fried shrimp appetizer that brings a flavor of Thailand. It is served on a slaw of different lettuces tossed in olive oil and mixed with chopped celery, diced almonds, sunflower seeds and chow mein noodles.

Creola's
19650 Highway 20, East Dubuque, IL 61025
815-747-3126 | Facebook.com/CreolasRestaurant

HOURS: Tue – Sat: 10 a.m. – 9 p.m., Sun: 3 - 7 p.m.
Mon: Closed (Except for private parties)

DINING STYLE: Come as you are

NOISE LEVEL: Conversational

RECOMMENDATIONS: Chicken Wings, Ginger Calamari, Spicy Thai Shrimp, House Potato Soup, Gumbo, Pulled Pork, Smokehouse Stacker, Manicotti, Smoked Ribs, Smokehouse Platter, Brisket Platter, Pan Seared Salmon, Fried Catfish

LIQUOR: Beer and wine available starting March 1st

PRICES: Lunch: \$6.95 to \$12.95; Dinner: \$10.95 to \$24.95

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, MasterCard, Visa, Discover, No Checks ATM on premise

ACCESSIBILITY: Front door, restrooms, back door ramp

RESERVATIONS: Yes **KIDS POLICY:** Menu (All meals \$5.95 includes drink), High Chair, Booster

CATERING: Yes **TAKE OUT:** Yes **DELIVERY:** No

PARKING: Private Lot

For the next course I recommend the House Signature Soup. It's a German inspired mixture of potatoes, carrots, peas and a little celery and onions with cheese and bacon crumbles. I also like the Gumbo which is a New Orleans style homemade roux (mixture of fat and butter) made from a secret family recipe containing okra, celery, red and green peppers and a generous amount of mild andouille (ahn-DWEE) sausage.



All lunch and dinner entrées are available any time of the day or evening. During a couple of recent lunch sessions my tasters enjoyed delicious pulled pork and brisket sandwiches. Kristina enjoyed Fish Tacos consisting of tilapia on white corn tortillas with Asian influenced slaw topped with cilantro and Cajun cream cheese dressing. The burgers are splendid. Two fresh quarter pound patties with cheese between them are grilled and served in your choice of monuments to beef glory. They are the Bacon Cheese; the Mushroom and Smoked Gouda with fresh portabella; the Smokehouse Stacker (#2 below) with brisket and smoked bacon; the Skillet served with onion rings and sharp cheddar and Swiss; and the lowly Plain Original. You can also add sautéed onions and the usual garden toppings of lettuce, tomato, pickle and onion. Be careful, though, because these things are way more than a full meal. Bryce ordered the Smokehouse Stacker with two of his favorite ingredients, brisket and bacon so he was in hamburger heaven!

Creola's dinner platters are all hearty meals. The Manicotti (below, right) is stuffed with a nice blend of cheeses including ricotta which pleases this Italian diner.

The best way to enjoy all the smoked meats is to order the Creola's Smokehouse Sampler. It includes brisket, pork shank, chicken quarter,



pulled pork and two sides of your choice. Our platter had coleslaw and gumbo (Pictured above).



The Beef Brisket (above) is thick sliced Texas style, slow roasted and served with au jus. Chicken is on the menu three different ways: covered with a house dry rub blend of special seasonings and smoked; hand breaded with a coating from a family recipe; and teriyaki style fried and glazed with honey apple cider. You can also get a tasty steak (below).

The Ribs are Saint Louis style. There are two ways to order: either applewood smoked or fire braised meaning grilled over an open flame. You choose your sauce such as Original, Honey BBQ, Chipotle or Teriyaki.



The seafood choices satisfy a wide range of seafood lover's palates. The Creamy Shrimp Creole is a dish of sautéed extra large shrimp (about 28 to a pound) tossed with a creamy parmesan sauce served over pasta. The Norwegian North Atlantic Salmon is pan seared with house seafood seasoning. The Catfish (#3 above) consists of two whole filets that are breaded with grandma's secret German breading recipe and fried.

The Side Dishes (pictured throughout these photos) offer another opportunity to try more impressive flavors. After all, there are 14 of them! Some examples are fresh-cut Idaho russet French fries; waffle cut sweet potato fries; baked beans containing hickory smoked bacon and house seasoning; red beans and rice with a mild seasoning; and spicier black beans and rice.

Then there is the Jambalaya: I like this side dish precisely because it is not exactly traditional New Orleans style. It does not contain crayfish and has andouille sausage instead of the typical chaurice (shore-EESE). It does have the rest of the usual ingredients including ham, shrimp, rice, tomatoes, green peppers, onions and seasonings.



Now that you have enjoyed a dinner of many flavors you can't stop eating just yet. The desserts are, how can I say this, a real treat! Every one of them is indescribably marvelous. The Chocolate Lover's Dream is a double Dutch chocolate brownie. The luscious Red Velvet Cheesecake is a marvel: the cheesecake is on the top and the red velvet cake is on the bottom. You would think it would be the other way around, wouldn't you? My favorite is the delectable Pineapple Upside Down Cake. This caught me by surprise since I am not usually a fan of cooked pineapple. These excellent sweets are lovingly prepared by expert pastry chef Joyce Dunbar of Crazy Lady Cakes in East Dubuque.

Creola's is one of those places where you can easily become a regular. Bring your friends and introduce them to new taste sensations. If you have lots of friends arrange for a private party. The back room can accommodate 38 guests and the entire restaurant is available on days they are not open. Creola's is place where you can get old favorites or try new things. Like their slogan says they will TEMPT YOUR TAST BUDS & WARM YOUR HEART!