



J.M.'s Tap and Pizza Place

by Rich Belmont



Posoh Mawanew Weyak! This means "Hello Everyone" in the language of the Menominee Indian Nation. Sometime before 1858 the town of Sinsinawa, Illinois was renamed Menominee in honor of that Tribe whose rich traditions, history and residency in the area now known as Wisconsin and parts of Michigan and Illinois still influence the local culture today.

At this time there are about 500 residents in the Village of Menominee. I suppose life in Menominee can be summed up like this: In the entire village there is only one sidewalk and it goes from Nativity BVM Catholic Church to J.M.'s tap & Pizza Place. Oh, and also there is a baseball field next to the church. During the spring and summer over 300 ball games are played on that field. Some would say it's the center of town. Others would say Nativity BVM Church is at the center and still others would argue J.M.'s Tap is the heart of Menominee. Certainly the tavern is the meeting place and best place to eat.

That's what Argosy's Food For Thought reader Sarah Hrynkowski told me when she e-mailed me to tell me about J.M.'s Tap & Pizza Place. She said it had great food and a delicious fish fry. She said I would not be disappointed and she was right!



I confess I did not know anything about this place. However, I now realize it has a long and proud history. The building was built in the early 1800's as a general store and tavern. It was across the street from a creamery which was later turned into the Menominee Cheese Factory. Farmers would haul milk to the factory every day and would stop in the store for supplies and to meet with their neighbors. Over time a stable, post office, church and baseball diamond were constructed nearby.

Dick Runde purchased the store and tavern in 1948. He and his wife Eloyse operated the business and raised nine children. All of their kids worked in the store. In 1969 Dick phased out the store while continuing to run the tavern as the de facto town hall. A raging fire severely damaged the building in 1978. It remained closed for five years.

In 1980 one of Dick and Eloyse's daughters, Karen, was working at Hardees in Dubuque where she met her future husband, Jerry Meyer. They married and continued to work at various jobs in Dubuque. On May 4, 1983 they took over the bar and renamed it J.M.'s Tap.



Jerry and Karen have operated this place for 31 years and along the way have had 4 kids. Like their uncles and aunts before them they have all worked in the tavern. Ashley and Eric still help out to this day.

{ march 2014 }



J.M.'s Tap serves a large assortment of beers in cans. On tap they have Busch Light, Michelob Amber Rock, Shock Top Honey Bourbon Cask Wheat, and Potosi Root Beer.

The Menominee Mai Tai is the house signature drink. The usual rum, Curacao liqueur and lime juice is mixed with other secret ingredients to make this libation really special. Mai Tai is the Tahitian word for "good" and this drink is way more than good.

J.M.'s Tap & Pizza Place

7625 N. Menominee Road, Menominee, IL
815-747-7730 Facebook.com/myJMs

HOURS: Mon: 2 pm – 1 am

Tues: Closed Wed – Fri 2 pm – 1 am Sat – Sun: 10 am – 1 am

DINING STYLE: Come as You Are

NOISE LEVEL: Conversational

RECOMMENDATIONS: Combo Basket with Breaded Green Beans, Mushrooms, Cauliflower, Pickles, Mac & Cheese Bites & Onion Rings; Pizzas; Bacon Cheeseburger; Pizza Burger; Carmichael; Philly Cheese Steak; Fried Chicken; Friday Night Fish Fry
LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, Menominee Mai Tai
PRICES: \$3.00 to \$16.95

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash or Checks. No Credit Cards, ATM on premises

KIDS POLICY: Welcome; No Menu, High Chair & Booster available

RESERVATIONS: Yes **CATERING:** No **TAKE OUT:** Yes

DELIVERY: No **PARKING:** On Street

On a recent Friday night Margie and I and tasting members Bryce, Mike and Kristina from 365ink, Cathy Goodman of Big Fish Creative and new tasting associates Leo and Keisha visited J.M.'s tap & Pizza Place. We pretty much tasted everything on the menu and we all agreed the place has exceptional food for extraordinarily reasonable prices. Our waitress, Brooke, made us feel welcome and cheerfully endured all of our questions.



The homemade pizzas are the specialties of the house. They come in two sizes and there are seven to choose from. Or you can build your own version by adding Italian sausage, Canadian bacon, pepperoni, onions, olives or mushrooms.

The BLT is definitely the most popular. More of these are sold than any other pizza. It contains copious amounts of Canadian bacon, iceberg lettuce, tomatoes and mayonnaise. Another favorite is the Deluxe with all the ingredients on the build-your-own list. I noticed a lot of Canadian Bacon and Sauerkraut pizzas coming out of the kitchen and the kids really like the Taco with seasoned taco beef, lettuce, tomato and tri-blend cheese (provolone, mozzarella and cheddar).

You can probably guess my favorite: the All Meat completely covered with a generous supply of sausage, bacon and pepperoni. If you love pizza as much as I do plan on visiting on Monday nights. The normally priced \$16.95 pizzas are only \$12.00!



J.M.'s Tap serves great tasting hamburgers. The Angus beef burgers come in either 1/4 pound or 1/3 pound sizes. I especially liked the Bacon Cheeseburger topped with hickory smoked bacon and American cheese. This week I am going back for the Pizza Burger. The beef in this one is thickly coated with Italian seasoned breading.

I have a sneaky suspicion me and several members of my tasting team will be in Menominee a lot. We will be going back for the specialty sandwiches. In one example, the Carmichael is the same specially seasoned beef patty that was developed in Dubuque. And the J.M.'s Tap version of the Philly Cheese Steak, while not exactly a traditional Philly is really good: thick slices of sandwich steak are piled high on a bun with lots of mushrooms, onions and melted Swiss cheese.



Sarah told me the All- You- Can- Eat Friday Fish Fry was delicious and now I know it to be true! I was pleasantly surprised to find this fish event is just like the ones that are ubiquitous all throughout Wisconsin where over 1 million portions of fish are served on any given Friday night during Lent. Pike is hand breaded with an in-house batter made according to a secret recipe. The coating is light and is fried to a satisfying crispiness. The fish is accompanied by a choice of thin, straight-cut fries or baked russet potato.

Your plate of fish also contains a nice freshly baked cinnamon roll from Sutter Bakery. The sweetness of the roll is a nice offset to the tart flavor of tartar sauce. Friday Fish Fries are offered from mid January to the end of April.



The Fried Chicken dinner is as good as the Pike. You receive a breast, wing, thigh and leg or you can request all white chicken consisting of two breasts and two wings. You needn't be concerned with fishy tasting chicken or fries either because the fish is fried in separate fryers.



J.M.'s Tap has several flat screen TVs so you can watch your favorite games and programs. While viewing you have a whole list of munchies to choose from. You can order individually or order a combo basket. I recommend the Fried Pickles, Mac and Cheese Bites, Cheese Curds, Green Beans, Onion Rings and Cauliflower.

When I said J.M.'s Tap & Pizza Place was the heart of Menominee I wasn't kidding. Events are held there all the time. For instance there are bowling parties, family team euchre tournaments, family softball tournaments, an annual rabbit hunt contest and karaoke nights with Rebecca McMahon. The next scheduled event is cribbage Sunday on March 30th.

J.M.'s Tap & Pizza Place is easy to get to from Highway 20. Just go North on Menominee Road and when you get into the Village of Menominee you can't miss it. It's right next to the church!