



Neighbor's Tap

by Rich Belmont



Don't worry! This article is not a thesis on the subtle differences between a bar, tavern, lounge, pub, brewpub, gastropub and tap. However, I must admit I was a little surprised when I first visited Neighbor's Tap and noticed there was not a single draft beer on tap. After all, the name of the place is Neighbor's Tap!

Then again, this spot has been defying expectations for generations. The building has been a general store, gas station and post office. Then it was turned in to Moe's Bar and later Obie's Bar. Jerry and Gayle James purchased it and renamed it Neighbor's Tap. They removed the juke box and pool tables and transformed it from a rowdy neighborhood bar into a respectable restaurant. After operating it for 14 years they turned it over to Barb and Jerry Hawbaker, the current owner's sister and brother-in-law. They subsequently sold it to Bill Skinner who has now been the owner and chef for 18 years.



Bill was previously the banquet chef at the Dubuque Greyhound Park and Casino (now Mystique). He is an expert in making plain, simple food taste great. He is also highly skilled in keeping costs down so he can maintain his low prices. Of course Bill credits his experienced and loyal staff for his success. Ann Volkert (call her Annie) is the floor manager, Jane Scarlino is the bartender, Julie Walter, Barb Johns and Abby Scarlino are waitresses, Michael Walter is the pizza maker and Bill's daughter, Trish Skinner, is the assistant cook and pizza dough maker.



Neighbor's is a good place to go when you just want a light dinner. There are several sandwiches on the menu and they are all priced between 2 and 4 dollars. Choose from hamburgers, codfish fillet, chicken fillet, pork tenderloin and hot dogs just to name a few. If you would like to try something a little different order the Neighborburger. This is a home-made, specially seasoned meat loaf style 1/3 pound burger. Then, of course, there is the famous Deep Fried Taco (pictured above the pizza). Neighbor's Tap is the only place in Dubuque County where you can get these. Seasoned beef is wrapped in pizza dough and deep fried. When it's done it is slit open and topped with shredded cheddar cheese, lettuce and tomato.

Neighbor's is also the place to take the family for dinner when you are on a tight budget. A large 14 inch cheese pizza in only \$14.00 and the chicken baskets range in price from \$5.25 for 2 pieces of dark meat to only \$10.00 for 4 pieces of white meat.



The pizza dough is made in house and there are 10 pizza toppings to choose from. When you don't feel like choosing the toppings you can order the Deluxe. It will come with all of them except sauerkraut. The Taco Pizza (above) has taco meat, taco chips, cheddar cheese, lettuce and tomato. The Super Taco Pizza includes the entire above list plus onion, black olives, green peppers and sour cream.

The Fried Chicken is definitely the most popular dinner. It is hand battered with seasoned flour and cooked at low temperature, under controlled low pressure in a Henny Penny fryer.

Neighbor's Tap
 1899 Rockdale Road, Dubuque, IA 52003, 563-556-9633
HOURS: Bar: 3-9 pm, Kitchen: 4-8:30 pm, Closed: Sun & Mon
DINING STYLE: Come as you are **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational
RECOMMENDATIONS: Neighborburger, Deep Fried Taco, Coleslaw, Homemade Pizzas, Top Sirloin, Pork Steak, Fried Chicken, Friday night fish special.
LIQUOR SERVICE: Basic Bar **PRICES:** \$2.00 - \$21.00
PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Local Checks with ID
ACCESSIBILITY: Front Door - Yes; Restrooms - No
KIDS POLICY: No Menu; High Chair & Boosters available
RESERVATIONS: Requested for 10 or more with week's notice & deposit
CATERING: No **TAKE OUT:** Yes **DELIVERY:** No
PARKING: Private Lot

On a recent visit our really cute and friendly waitress, Abby Scarlino, helped us choose some fabulous entrées. My guests and I feasted on a 3 topping pizza, fried chicken dinners and Top Sirloin Steak. The steaks are broiled on a slotted gas grill and are particularly scrumptious when accompanied by buttered mushrooms. Abby offered us a choice of homemade hand-cut French fries, baked potato or crinkle cut fries. She also asked us to choose fresh lettuce tossed salads, cottage cheese or coleslaw. She highly recommended the coleslaw because it is made from fresh cabbage in accordance with an old Skinner family recipe. I now know to trust Abby's suggestions!

Speaking of old family recipes I recently returned to Neighbor's for a house specialty that isn't on the menu. You have to call in advance and order it but it is well worth the extra effort. It's simply called the Tenderized Pork Steak (right). It is coated with special



seasonings and either grilled or breaded and fried and served with BBQ sauce on the side. It is so delicious I was disappointed when I finished my last bite!

The Fish Basket contains 3 pieces of cod and is served with fries and coleslaw. It's available every night. However, on Fridays the Fish Fry is a real treat. This is especially true during Lent when Lemon Pepper Cod is available. It's hard to believe the Cod Dinner is only \$10.75. That's because Bill only purchases the more expensive Icelandic Cod. This fish has a dense white flesh with a low fat content and a mild, sweet flavor. Icelandic Cod is caught in the cold water of the North Atlantic Ocean surrounding Iceland. Cod weighing 10 to 15 pounds each are specially packed in gel-pack boxes and shipped overnight to distributors.



Oh, and by the way, the food at Neighbor's Tap will definitely exceed your expectations. The beers are national domestic brands and only cost \$2.50. Just don't expect to order them on tap - they are all served in bottles!



