



Otto's Place Café & Lounge

100 Bouthillier Street, Galena, IL 61036
815-776-0240 • www.OttosPlace.com

HOURS: Sun-Mon-Wed, 7:00 am – 3:00 pm
Thu-Fri-Sat, 7:00 am – 10:00 pm, Closed Tuesdays
DINING STYLE: Casual Cafe & Lounge

NOISE LEVEL: Conversational

RECOMMENDATIONS: Country Benedict, Banana Bread French Toast, Frittatas, Coffee Cake, Dumbarton Blue Cheese, Plate, Sloppy Julia, Chicken Salad;
When Available: Salisbury Steak, Chicken Florentine, Pulled Pork BBQ, Beef Stroganoff, Chicken Pot Pie

LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, Straight or Rocks Drinks only

PRICES: Breakfast: \$1.95 - \$7.95; Lunch: \$5.75 - \$9.95, Entrées: \$12.95 - \$16.95

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Checks, All Credit Cards, No Debit Cards,

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Ramp to Back Door & Restroom

KIDS POLICY: No Menu, No High Chair or Booster

RESERVATIONS: 2 to 30, **CATERING:** Yes, **TAKE OUT:** Yes, **DELIVERY:** No

PARKING: On Street & Municipal Lot across the street(free after 5:00 p.m.)



OTTO'S PLACE CAFÉ & LOUNGE

by Rich Belmont

So Otto Sallman's Restaurant has come full circle. You probably don't know who Otto was. In 1899 he built a building on Bouthillier Street in Galena next to the railroad tracks right across the street from the Train Depot. We know he intended to open a restaurant because the October 20, 1899 Galena Daily Gazette contained an article titled "Otto Sallman Restaurant Handsomely Equipped". Otto ran out of money, however, and never got to fulfill his dream. In subsequent years his building served as a handmade basket store, home bakery, grocery store, pizza parlor, furniture store, antique shop and more recently a sandwich café.



The building went dark again for a while and that's when John Slimp and Dan Wentz saw an opportunity. They had been part-time residents of Galena for 9 years and like everyone else they love Galena. So they relocated to Galena permanently, purchased the building and concluded it was time to open the restaurant Otto had envisioned.

John had been an Executive with Designer Shoe Warehouse and knows how to manage and Dan not only has a passion for cooking but was an experienced chef. He learned to cook at the Café Balaban, a Saint Louis, MO landmark of outstanding classic French Bistro cuisine. He gained more experience as a chef of exclusive dining at the Naperville Country Club in Naperville, IL.

The new owners never met Otto of course, they are not that old! However, they surmised that he would have wanted a place offering an ever changing menu focusing on healthy home cooking, organic and vegetarian options, featuring local products where and when possible.



John and Dan spent four months refurbishing and remodeling the venerable old building. They had a hole cut into the ceiling and added a new beautiful stairway. This opened the upstairs to more tables and a conversation area with sofas and lounge chairs. Through all of its history the building never had a commercial kitchen. So John and Dan had to have all new kitchen appliances installed.



Then the owners went to work on finding suppliers who would meet their criteria for local, fresh, organic foods. Lucky for us they found people like Chris Roelli of Roelli Cheese Haus in Shullsburg, WI. (www.roellicheese.com) who provides the Sun Dried Tomato Basil Cheese and the Dumbarton Blue Cheese. This Blue Cheese is Chris's own creation and it is to die for and it is exclusive to Otto's Place in Galena! Chris uses hybrid cheese making technologies including piercing the cheeses and aging 4 months in a very humid cave. The result is cheddar with blue veins that has a buttery, milky, earthy taste.



When you order the Dumbarton Blue Cheese Appetizer Plate you will be amazed at how quickly people who say they don't like blue cheese finish the plate. While I am on the subject of appetizers you should also try the BHT Appetizer Platter. This stands for Baba Ghanoush, Hummus and Tabouli and it is an absolute delight. Baba Ghanoush is a Lebanese dish of roasted eggplant pureed with virgin olive oil and Tahini which is sesame paste. The Hummus is cooked, mashed chickpeas blended with Tahini, olive oil, lemon juice and garlic. Tabouli is Bulgur Wheat with finely chopped parsley, cucumber and mint. You spread these toppings on sun-dried tomato flatbread and then sit back and enjoy.

The sausage, bacon and pork specialties come from another local supplier, Arnolds Farm in Elizabeth, IL.(www.arnoldsfarm.com) The Tom and Jessica Arnold Family produce beef, pork, lamb, chickens and turkeys in harmony with the natural environment. The chemical and antibiotic free meat is raised outside with access to sunshine, fresh air and shelter. It is all processed by A.J.'s Lena Maid Meats in Lena, IL and custom cut to each customer's specifications.

Otto's Place opens for breakfast at 7 am. The hand patted buttermilk biscuits are made fresh daily. They are delicious on their own but even better when covered with Dan's own sausage gravy made with Arnold's Organic Pork Sausage and served as the Biscuits and Gravy breakfast. My favorite variation of this is the Country Benedict. It has two eggs cooked the way you like on top of Arnold's sausage patties and biscuits covered with that creamy gravy.

The Banana Bread French Toast is also a very popular breakfast. The bread is baked from scratch using 7 bananas which are mashed with flour, butter, eggs and walnuts. The bread is then dipped in the batter and grilled.

There are also several Omelets and Frittatas on this menu. Now you know omelets have the egg mixture cooked and folded around a filling and fried in a pan. And Frittatas have the ingredients mixed directly into



the egg mixture and baked in a dish. Many of Otto's regulars choose the Frittatas because they are puffer. You have your choice of the Roasted Vegetable and Goat Cheese or the Spinach, Mushroom and Roelli's famous Sun-dried Tomato Basil Cheese.



Otto's lunches are so amazing. The Sloppy Julia is Beef Bourguignon; braised beef cooked in red wine and beef broth in accordance with Julia Child's own recipe. The Chicken Salad Sandwich is so good and it is so simple. White meat chicken is cooked and shredded and mixed with mayonnaise. Grapes, cranberries, walnuts and celery are added to add a little flavor tease. The Chicken Bacon Club is also very popular. A chicken breast and Arnold's organic bacon are placed on a pretzel roll. Organic spinach is used instead of lettuce.

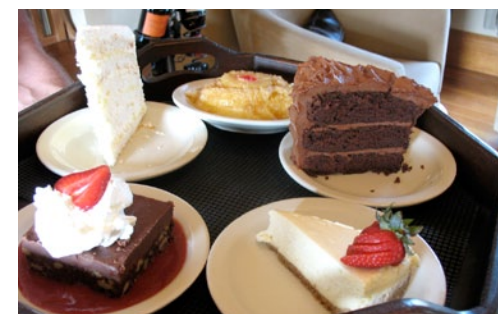


While Otto's is primarily a breakfast and lunch place it is quickly gaining a reputation as a gourmet dinner restaurant as well. Dinners are only served on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. On those nights there are 3 entrees to choose from as well as the entire breakfast and lunch menu. The dinner entrees are all chefs' choice and they are all wonderful.



Last week-end we had Salisbury Steak and Mushrooms served with rice. Also, Chicken Florentine completely stuffed with fresh spinach and cheese and a BBQ Pork Sandwich covered with John's secret sauce. On other week-ends you might find Beef Stroganoff, Chicken Pot Pie, Spinach Lasagna Rolls or Blackened Cajun Chicken Pasta.

For a place that bills itself as a quiet, out of the way, café and lounge you will be surprised on how exquisite this place really is. For example, the beer and wine is carefully chosen to pair well with the food. And the staff is courteous, efficient and knowledgeable. Our server did an excellent job of explaining every dish. He could not have been more pleasant and accommodating. He made us friends for life when he brought over the dessert tray. The Lemon Ice Box Cake, Cheese Cake and a made to order individual Pineapple Upside Down Cake are the Otto's Place Signature Desserts. All of the desserts are made in house from scratch. No frozen pre-made desserts here! Last weekend Dan had also made a Chocolate Mayonnaise Cake and a Chocolate Brownie with Fudge Topping and Heavy Whipped Cream. All of them were so good we had to have a few bites of each!



There is no doubt John and Dan have created a culinary gem off the beaten path in Galena. Otto would be very, very pleased!

