



**Star Restaurant and Ultra Lounge**

by Rich Belmont

You are probably thinking you need to take your honey out to dinner to celebrate Valentine's Day. What a splendid idea! In fact it's most likely not only a good plan but also an exercise in keeping the peace! Even if you are giving your special someone a great gift a delicious dinner at a wonderful restaurant commemorates the occasion.



The Star Restaurant and Ultra Lounge along the Mississippi River in Dubuque, Iowa is the perfect setting for Valentine's Day. It is located in the Dubuque Star Brewery, Iowa's oldest brewery founded in 1898. Five years ago the second floor of this historic building was transformed into a beautiful restaurant by Matt and Sarah Kluesner. They did a stupendous job designing the romantic atmosphere but their real stars are their signature dishes.

It's no surprise to all their regular patrons because the Kluesner's are experts in fine dining. Sarah's parents were in the restaurant business so she has been involved with food her whole life. She graduated from the University of Houston, Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel Restaurant Management. She not only holds a BS in Hotel and Restaurant Management but also a culinary degree from the Art Institute of Houston International Culinary program. After completing her education she gained experience at Morton's The Steakhouse and also Ruth's Chris Steakhouse. Returning to the Dubuque area Sarah and Matt opened the Backstreet Steakhouse in Galena, IL. Sarah controlled the front of the house and Matt managed the bar and kitchen.



While Star is primarily a restaurant of American cuisine its similarities to a high end steakhouse are obvious. All the beef is Prime Grade and aged for approximately 28 days on the premises. All meat is hand carved and expertly trimmed. The Filet Mignon is the most popular cut. However, the Bone-In Ribeye and Kansas City Strip are also big sellers. This is because meat lovers know the closer to the bone, the sweeter the meat as the old song goes. While most steakhouses serve a T-Bone steak the Star offers the regal Porterhouse since it has a large strip and larger filet than a T-Bone. All the steaks are grilled on an open-flamed indoor charcoal grill at close to 1500 degrees Fahrenheit. Prime Rib is on the menu every day. Perhaps more importantly to us meat eaters Star manages to keep the prices of all steaks under \$20.00.

The current menu is the collaboration between Matt and Sarah and their new Chef, Fred Orange. Chef Orange is a graduate of Kendall College, School of Culinary Arts in Chicago. His presentation of entrées is a testament to his skill and creativity.



Recently my 365ink Magazine colleagues and I enjoyed an exquisite dinner. For starters we had Fried Mozzarella Bites of fresh mozzarella rolled in Panko crumbs (above). We also had Beef and Bleu Fondue (below), a blue cheese dip served with grilled pieces of house steak and bread cubes accompanied by balsamic roasted tomatoes.



The White Chicken Nachos (above) appetizer was outstanding. Pulled chicken, spinach and artichoke hearts mixed with a roasted garlic parmesan cream. Sarah's recipe for this dish was featured in the Reader's Choice section of Gourmet Magazine a few years ago.



Julie enjoyed her fresh Blue Apple Salad (right) overflowing with candied pecans, Granny Smith apples and crumbled blue cheese and Margie loved the Grilled Salmon with Honey Mustard Glaze (below). I had an excellent Chef's Special



Kansas City Strip coated with a chile rub made from the dried peppers of Chile Ancho, Chile de Arbol (also known as Bird's Beak) and Pasilla (sometimes called Little Raisin).



Christie really liked the Rotisserie Free Range Chicken (above) hand rubbed with 18 seasonings. Mike said his Filet Mignon (right) was a marvelous melt-in-your-mouth steak and



Bryce, our 365ink publisher and pig connoisseur was overjoyed with his large Iowa grown Pork Loin encrusted with a seasoned rub of brown sugar, coffee and garlic (above).

**Star Restaurant and Ultra Lounge**

600 Star Brewery Drive, Suite 200., Dubuque, IA 563-556-4800 | www.DBQStar.com

**HOURS:** Mon - Sat, 11 am - Close, Sun 4 pm - Close

**DINING STYLE:** Casual **NOISE LEVEL:** Moderate

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Beef and Bleu Fondue, White Chicken Nachos, Big Texan Burger, Bone-In Ribeye, BBQ Pork Ribs, Porterhouse, Rotisserie Chicken, Iowa Pork Loin

**LIQUOR SERVICE:** Full Bar; Signature Startini, Micro Brews on tap

**PRICE RANGE:** Apps: \$5.95 - \$9.95; Entrees: \$7.95 - \$19.95

**RESERVATIONS:** Recommended. Make reservations on line at DBQStar.com

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

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Elevator to 2nd floor, lift to upper level bar

**KIDS POLICY:** Menu; High Chairs; Boosters; Children's DVD's

**CATERING:** Yes, Including catering liquor license

**DELIVERY:** Yes **TAKE OUT:** Yes

**PARKING:** Large Private Lot



I must not forget to mention how accommodating the restaurant staff was. Throughout our dinner Jolene Adams made sure we had everything we needed. She was also very knowledgeable and cheerfully answered all of our questions pertaining to food preparation. Even Cassie McDonald, our most gracious hostess, checked to make sure we were having fun. And we certainly were, especially when Jolene brought in all the in-house made-from-scratch desserts. They were all spectacular and impossible to resist. I still can't believe we ate them all: the Toasted Coconut Ice, Strawberry Cream Brûlée, Cookie Dough Egg Rolls, Cheesecake Lollipops, Grasshopper Pie, Chocolate Layer Cake, and my favorite, the Italian Wedding Cake.

There will be some very special entrées and desserts for Valentine's Day. You and your Valentine will choose from: House Made Lobster Ravioli stuffed with fresh lobster meat and homemade ricotta in a Basil Marinara and Parmesan Garlic Cream or a Blue



Cheese Encrusted New York Strip with Red Wine Reduction. How about an 8 oz. Beef Tenderloin paired with a 10 oz. Cold Water Lobster Tail? Or you can order two Lobster Tails or a plate of King Crab Legs. These legs are monstrous! Star uses 6-9 count meaning 6 to 9 legs equal 10 pounds. All of these entrees are served with the House Skillet Corn Bread with Honey Butter, House Salad and Garlic Mashed Potatoes. Special desserts will be Chocolate Crème Brûlée or Berries Romanoff topped with Grand Marnier Whipping Cream. Don't be concerned if you can't make it on Tuesday, Valentine's Day. The specials will be available Saturday, February 11th through Saturday, February 18th.



The regular menu will be served in addition to Star's Sweetheart Specials. Or you can order from the "Two for \$25" menu. This special menu is served Sunday through Thursday after 4:00 pm except on Valentine's Day because on that day you will want to order something a little more in keeping with the spirit of the holiday. Choose one appetizer, two entrees and one dessert proportioned just right for a couple. The entrees include Prime Rib Sandwich, BBQ Pulled Pork Sandwich, Asian Salad, English Cut Prime Rib, Iowa Pork Loin or Caprese Pasta with Pulled Rotisserie Chicken.

Star is open for lunch. There are some new burgers on the menu including the Big Texan topped with pulled pork, BBQ sauce and cheddar cheese. The dining room frequently fills up with people clamoring for the daily Blue Plate Specials. Enjoy Monday's Homemade Enchiladas, Tuesday's Chicken Pot Pie, Tarragon Chicken Salad Plate on Wednesday, Open Faced Turkey Sandwich on Thursday and Fish and Chips on Friday. These specials are available 11:00 am until 2:00 pm and all are specially priced at just \$8.95.

Star accommodates private parties of all sizes. There are at least 5 separate rooms. Some of them offer great views of the Mississippi river, one of them has a nice view of downtown Dubuque, and some of them are equipped for business meetings. Contact Star for information on their menus for private party catering, shower luncheons, and buffet or plated wedding rehearsal dinners.

Star Restaurant and Ultra Bar promises you will have an exciting and memorable experience on Valentine's Day and come to think of it on any other day too. Please make your reservations soon, though, because tables are going fast!

