



**The Bridge Restaurant & Lounge**

by Rich Belmont



How many times have you crossed the Julien Dubuque Bridge into Dubuque and looked over at the gray industrial-looking building almost in front of you? Well, did you know that unimposing edifice has been a continuously operating restaurant since 1961? It was originally called The Bridge Café and was open 24 hours a day for early breakfasts and late night dinners. After several years a bar was added and it was renamed The Bridge Restaurant & Lounge. John and Teresa Hall bought it and ran it for approximately 12 years. Then Ray and Sandy Herzog purchased it and have now been operating it for another 20 years.



Ray was not new to the restaurant business. When he was only 15 he started working at the long gone Cock and Bull Supper Club in Dubuque. By age 21 he was managing the Manchester Golf and Country Club in Manchester, Iowa. Then he chose to acquire some corporate experience by becoming a manager in both the Happy Chef and Perkins Restaurant and Bakery chains before opening his own restaurant. Ray and Sandy's son, Nick, grew up in The Bridge and now he is the Manager. In fact, many of Ray and Sandy's employees have been with them for many years. For example the cook, Greg Shireman, has been in the kitchen for 16 years already!

When you are at the corner of Dodge and Locust Streets you can easily see The Bridge Restaurant & Lounge.

Getting to it, however, is a little tricky. I recommend you visit their website ([www.BridgeRest.com](http://www.BridgeRest.com)) for excellent directions for Dubuque people as well as those coming from Illinois or Wisconsin.

Once you find your way inside it's time to relax with a refreshing beverage. The bartenders are experts at mixing a prodigious assortment of enticing cocktails. Just reading the drink list found on every table is like a trip down memory lane. Some examples include: Cosmopolitan, vodka, triple sec and cranberry juice; Blue Cosmo, Blue Curacao triple sec and cranberry; B52



with Kahlúa, Amaretto and Bailey's; The Creamsicle, vanilla vodka, triple sec, OJ and cream; and my favorite The Chocolate Martini made with vanilla vodka, Crème de Cacao and Bailey's Irish Cream.

**The Bridge Restaurant & Lounge**  
 31 Locust Street, Dubuque, IA 52001  
 563-557-7280 [www.BridgeRest.com](http://www.BridgeRest.com)  
[Facebook.com/TheBridgeRestaurant](https://www.facebook.com/TheBridgeRestaurant)  
**KITCHEN HOURS:** Wed - Thu: 4 pm - 8 pm  
 Fri - Sat: 4 pm - 9 pm, Sun: 4 pm - 8 pm  
 Sun Breakfast Buffet: 8 am - 1 pm, Mon - Tue: Closed  
**DINING STYLE:** Casual **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational  
**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Top Sirloin or Ribeye Steak; Broasted Chicken; Broiled Tilapia or Walleye Pike; Fried Shrimp; BBQ Pork Ribs; Battered Catfish; Top Sirloin & Shrimp Combo; Stuffed Shrimp & Frog Legs Combo; Chocolate Lava Cake  
**LIQUOR SERVICE:** Full Bar; Old Fashioned, Manhattan, Ice Cream Drinks  
**PRICES:** \$11.95 - \$20.95  
**PAYMENT OPTIONS:** Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards  
**ACCESSIBILITY:** Ramp to front door  
**KIDS POLICY:** Menu, High Chair, Boosters  
**RESERVATIONS:** Yes **CATERING:** No  
**TAKE OUT:** Yes **DELIVERY:** No **PARKING:** Private Lot



The Bridge is a very popular place even after 53 years in business. That's because it features home cooking which is not too fancy so prices remain reasonable. The most expensive entrée is a full one pound Top Sirloin or Ribeye Steak for only \$20.95! They are Choice Grade and are expertly prepared on a steak-broiler.



All the soups, salads and sauces are made in house. The iceberg lettuce and cabbage salads are fresh and the soups are thick and hearty. I recently had Cream of Potato and Vegetable Barley and I could not decide which one I liked more!



Many of the regulars keep returning because of the large variety of choices. There are steaks, BBQ ribs, broasted chicken and an unbelievable list of 21 seafood specialties. Just about everything on the menu can be ordered as part of a combination dinner where you pick 2 different specialties. Steak and Rib Combos are very popular but so are pairings like chicken and shrimp or broiled and battered fish.

I am told one of the most popular combo items is, believe it or not, Frogs Legs. These are considered a Southern delicacy and there are not too many places around here that offer them. The Bridge's Frogs Legs come from commercial farms where white meat cultivated bullfrogs are raised. They buy medium size which means there are 6 to 8 pairs of legs per pound. These are skinless and they are purchased saddle-on meaning the meat above the frog's pelvis is included. They are batter dipped and fried and have a mild flavor very similar in taste and texture to chicken wings.



With 8 different broiled seafood specialties and 8 battered fish items on the menu it is easy to understand why The Bridge cooks are seafood experts. Some of your choices are Broiled Cod, Battered Cod or Lemon-Pepper Cod. Or perhaps Hand Battered Catfish fillets (below) or whole Catfish (only on Friday) or broiled or battered Tilapia. Some of the fish dishes are unique: like Stuffed Flounder and Tortilla Crusted Whitefish.



purchased with the skin on so the broiled fillets always have skin on the bottom side.

Another way the kitchen demonstrates its seafood talent is by offering you 5 different kinds of shrimp. So you can order Deep Fried Extra Jumbo, Broiled, Shrimp Scampi, Breaded Coconut or Stuffed with Crab and Monterey cheese.



I was surprised to find out the Bridge serves hundreds of people during their Sunday Breakfast Buffet. It's only \$7.99 and it includes eggs, potatoes, French toast, bacon, sausage, biscuits and gravy, corned beef hash, fruit, Danish and muffins.



I learned something I didn't know about Walleye Pike. You can tell you are served a real walleye because they are

The chicken is hand battered and lightly dusted then broasted in pressurized fryers insuring juicy meat with a crispy crust. The smoked pork chops are grilled in a homemade sauce consisting of cherry juice, pineapple and brown sugar. I especially enjoyed the Baby Back Ribs cooked in a power broiler and simmered 5 to 6 hours before being covered with a homemade sauce that does not overpower the meat.

I discovered it's always a good idea to check out the nightly specials before ordering. Some of these like Broasted Chicken on Wednesdays Thursdays and Sundays; Liver and Onions on Thursdays; Whole Catfish on Fridays; Full Rack of Ribs or Ribeye Steak on Saturdays; and Top Sirloin with Mushrooms on Sundays are good deals.



And you know how I always say save room for dessert! There is a great chocolate lava cake bursting with chocolate sauce and your choice of all your favorite ice cream drinks including Grasshopper, Golden Cadillac, Pink Squirrel, Brandy Alexander and Charlie Brown.



The Bridge Restaurant & Lounge has a total seating capacity of 190. There is the Main Dining Room, the Bar Dining Room and the Banquette Room. The experienced staff is skilled in handling rehearsal dinners, birthdays, anniversaries, showers, class reunions, business meetings, holiday parties, family reunions and graduation parties. Whatever your private party occasion The Bridge knows how to make it memorable.

Oh, and one more thing. Before you leave take a few minutes to check out the photos adorning the walls. There are some spectacular pictures of bridges and also a collection of Ray's interesting snapshots of sunrises over the Julien Dubuque Bridge taken from the roof of The Bridge Restaurant & Lounge!

*Do you have a favorite restaurant you would like to see reviewed? Please send your requests, suggestions and comments to Argosy at argomark@mchsi.com.*