



Here come the appetizers at Tornado Club Steak House, a classic Wisconsin supper club in Madison, Wis.
(*Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier*)

By Katherine Rodeghier Posted 3/13/2023 5:00 AM
Daily Herald Correspondent

"An army marches on its stomach," said Napoleon Bonaparte. If your army of travelers plans on a march through the Midwest, take time to sample some local flavors when it's time to refuel.

Wisconsin is supper-club country. Fans of these classic old-school restaurants find plenty of choices across the state as evidenced in the "Wisconsin Supper Club Cookbook." Author Mary Bergin dined at Tornado Club Steak House with Samantha Brown, host of the PBS travel series "Samantha Brown's Places to Love," for a segment in this year's sixth season. The Tornado is Madison's premier downtown steak house with knotty pine walls, white tablecloths and a complimentary relish tray in traditional 1950s supper-club style. Diners can start with a cocktail, perhaps an old fashioned, Wisconsin's signature drink often made with brandy instead of bourbon. Appetizers include coquille Saint Jacques, shrimp cocktail, escargot, frog legs and oysters Rockefeller. In addition to beef steaks, the menu includes venison, rack of lamb, rabbit, duck, walleye and Alaskan king crab legs. With any luck, an old-time favorite, pineapple upside-down cake, will remain among the dessert options. tornadosteakhouse.com/
(<https://www.tornadosteakhouse.com/>)

Huntington, Indiana

Pork tenderloin sandwiches fill plates across the Hoosier state. Nick Freienstein claimed he was the first to serve the sandwich back in 1908 setting off a pork tenderloin frenzy. At Nick's Kitchen, tenderloin sandwiches are made with the same recipe Freienstein himself used. Restaurants all over Indiana created their own variations of the sandwich, breaded in cracker crumbs and soaked in buttermilk before it's grilled or fried. It's often topped with tomato, lettuce, onion and mayo. Hoosiers debate how to eat it: Starting with the edges or cutting the meat then stacking it tall in the bun. nicksdowntown.com/
(<https://www.nicksdowntown.com/>)

Quad Cities, Illinois/Iowa

rather than slices. Cornmeal lightly layers the bottom of the thin crust, cheese usually goes on top of other ingredients, such as crumbled sausage and fennel seeds. Family-owned Harris Pizza started a half-century ago and now operates four locations. harrispizza.com/ (<https://harrispizza.com/>)

- Lagomarcino's was founded in 1908 and is a fourth-generation family-owned confectionary known for hot fudge sundaes, hand-dipped chocolates, sponge candy and filled chocolate eggs at Easter. Now a fourth-generation enterprise, it boasts a James Beard American Classics Award and has two Quad Cities locations. lagomarcinos.com/ (<https://lagomarcinos.com/>)

Sister Bay, Wisconsin

Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant, the popular Door County eatery with goats on the roof, is an authentic Swedish family-owned restaurant. Goats graze atop the sod roof from May through October. Inside the casual dining room, servers in Scandinavian garb dish a variety of Swedish fare, from pancakes with lingonberries to Swedish meatballs, whitefish, sandwiches, salads, and a variety of hot and cold plates. aljohnsons.com/ (<https://aljohnsons.com/>)

Springfield, Missouri

If you're cruising across Missouri on Route 66, stop for a tasty dish with an Asian twist. When Leong's Tea House opened in 1963 it struggled to gain acceptance for Chinese food. David Leong came up with Springfield-style cashew chicken: fried chicken chunks covered with Chinese oyster sauce, cashews and chopped green onion. It was an immediate hit and soon versions appeared on menus coast to coast. Though Leong's Tea House closed in 1997, Springfield-style cashew chicken's legacy remains part of Springfield's past and present.



Toppings are slathered on a hot dog at Lafayette Coney Island in downtown Detroit, Mich. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Detroit, Michigan

fierce rivalry exists between two no-frills coney restaurants located next to one another downtown, American Coney Island

(americanconeyisland.com/home.htm

(<http://americanconeyisland.com/home.htm>)) and Lafayette Coney Island

(foursquare.com/v/lafayette-coney-island/

([https://foursquare.com/v/lafayette-coney-](https://foursquare.com/v/lafayette-coney-island/4ad2598ff964a5200ee120e3)

[island/4ad2598ff964a5200ee120e3](https://foursquare.com/v/lafayette-coney-island/4ad2598ff964a5200ee120e3))). Who's top dog? Try both and decide.



Bloody mary's come with elaborate garnishes at Sobelman's Pub & Grill in Milwaukee, Wis. - Courtesy of Katherine Rodeghier

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Is it a cocktail or a meal? In some Milwaukee restaurants, it's both when ordering a bloody mary. The standard vodka- and tomato juice-based drink is usually garnished with olives and a stalk of celery, but in MKE, garnishes rise to a whole new level. At Sobelman's Pub & Grill, housed in one of the city's original

progresses, the number of garnishes goes up in quantity and outrageousness: a cheeseburger slider on a skewer, bacon-wrapped jalapeno cheese balls, bacon-wrapped chicken slathered in bourbon sauce, even a whole fried chicken.

sobelmanspubandgrill.com/ (<https://sobelmanspubandgrill.com/>)



Taylor's Maid-Rite in Marshalltown is one of the oldest Maid-Rite franchises in Iowa. - Courtesy of Iowa Tourism Office

Marshalltown, Iowa

The Hawkeye State is known for loose-meat sandwiches made by the Maid-Rite Corp. with franchises across Iowa. Taylor's Maid-Rite in Marshalltown, one of the earliest franchises, has the look and feel of a retro diner and has been serving central Iowa for more than 90 years. Each sandwich is made from 100% choice beef ground fresh every day, cooked in a cast-iron cooker along with secret

Danville, Indiana

The Mayberry Cafe draws fans of "The Andy Griffith Show" from around the world. It serves up the kind of down-home cooking you'd expect, including fried chicken so good it has Aunt Bee's name. TVs air reruns of the show and framed quotes from the TV classic hang on the wall in booths. Barney's squad car provides photo ops outside. "Shazam!" mayberrycafe.com/
(<https://www.mayberrycafe.com/>)

Fish Creek, Wisconsin

Door County fish boils have been one of the popular peninsula's most alluring attractions for more than 70 years. Early Scandinavian settlers brought this unusual cooking tradition from the homelands with most meals featuring Lake Michigan whitefish, onions and potatoes. Fish boils are available at several restaurants, including Door County's most historic inn established in 1896. The White Gull Inn in Fish Creek lights up its fish boil on Friday nights. whitegullinn.com/ (<https://www.whitegullinn.com/>)



The horseshoe, an open-face sandwich, is a specialty in Springfield, Ill., restaurants. - Courtesy of Visit Springfield Illinois CVB

Springfield, Illinois

- The Illinois capital's culinary claim to fame, the horseshoe sandwich, originated in the 1920s at what was then the Leland Hotel. Served open-face on Texas toast, it has a choice of meat, fries and a cheese sauce. Diners who want a slimmed-down version order a pony shoe. D'Arcy's Pint adds corned beef to its meat options in keeping with its Irish theme. darcypintonline.com/
(<https://darcypintonline.com/>)
- Charlie Parker's Diner, featured on Food Network's "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives," serves lunch and all-day breakfast in a Quonset hut. Its breakfast shoe comes with an egg and hash browns or seasoned fries. charlieparkersdiner.com/
(<https://charlieparkersdiner.com/>)

Winchester, Indiana

sweet dessert dates back to the 1800s when Amish and Shaker cooks made it from flour, butter, vanilla, sugar and nutmeg. Wick's Pies Inc., ships sugar cream and other varieties of pies across the U.S. Sit down for a slice at Mrs. Wick's Restaurant & Pie Shop down the street from the pie factory.

wickspies.com/bakery-cafe/ (<https://www.wickspies.com/bakery-cafe/>)

Balltown, Iowa

Breitbach's Country Dining, Iowa's oldest food and drinking establishment, opened in 1852. Jacob Breitbach purchased the tavern in 1862 and it is now in its sixth generation of family ownership. The restaurant serves up homemade comfort food, was featured in the documentary "Spinning Plates" and received a James Beard Foundation America's Classic award.

breitbachscountrydining.com/ (<https://www.breitbachscountrydining.com/>)

- Information for this article was gathered during research trips and writer's conferences sponsored by local tourism bureaus.

\$1 for 4 Weeks

Don't wait - Get a great introductory deal
on Daily Herald's Digital Content!

SUBSCRIBE NOW
