



FALL 2022

RELISH

CITYVIEW'S GUIDE TO ALL THINGS DINING

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THE GIFT OF FOOD

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CITYVIEW'S GUIDE TO ALL THINGS DINING

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The gift of food

Options have grown exponentially since FedEx changed the world.



By Jim Duncan

Gifting is difficult. Giving bad gifts is easy. There are entire industries producing bad gift ideas, from inflatable sex toys to disco balls and offensive T-shirts. Johnny Carson used to say that the worst gift is a fruitcake. "There is only one fruitcake in the entire world, and people keep sending it to each other." Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David made a TV show about that. Kurt Vonnegut was probably thinking about fruitcakes when he wrote about post-Apocalypse visitors trying to figure out how all the Earthlings died despite their food still being unspoiled.

Milton Berle joked that he took comfort in knowing that this year's Christmas presents would become next

summer's garage sales. Craig Ferguson teased that "the worst gift I was given is when I got out of rehab: a bottle of wine. It was delicious."

One friend, who is a doctor, cited fruitcakes and sweets in general as bad food gift ideas. Ferguson said chocolate is the most popular Valentine's Day gift because 19th-century doctors believed that it cured broken hearts. He added, "They also thought if you're going to be alone, who cares if you get fat?"

In this year of inflation, monkeypox, unchecked recidivism among felons, saber rattling and malaise of hope, why not give the gift of food, other than fruitcake? Bosses have been endearing themselves to workers for years by giving hams and

turkeys for holidays. Food gifts are more popular outside America than within. The great late food writer R.W. "Johnny" Apple thought that was because American children grow up thinking food is their birthright and gifts should be something more extravagant.

It is difficult to imagine American children getting excited about a Christmas orange, like the Swedish kids do in Ingmar Bergman's "Fanny & Alexander," or the Bengali children do over mangos in Satyajit Ray films. But this is a time that tries American souls. Plus, food options have grown exponentially since FedEx changed the world. So, here are some gift ideas that we think are special.

The new butchers

Greater Des Moines is now blessed with two new options for special meats. One is completely local; one is most worldly. They join B&B Meat Market and Deli as places where very special gifts can be found for special occasions like holiday dinners and beyond. B&B sells nearly triple-digit numbers of dry-aged, prime rib roasts each Christmas Eve. The trick is to remember to order at least two months in advance. Fareway upgraded their luxury meats recently. They now sell wagyu, which is the breed of cattle used in the legendary Kobe beef of Japan. It has ridiculously rich marbling. The Fareway Meat Markets in Ames and Beaverdale have expanded meat sections and choices and sell bargain-priced bundles. Fresh Thyme and Sam's Club have upped their lamb profiles.

But it is the new kids in town that truly expand meat offerings. Old Station Craft Meats in Waukee is a paean to another time and place. Owner Nick Lenters says, "We are trying to bring back some of the benefits of the way things used to be done." His place is like a superb farmers market moved into a permanent indoor venue.

He attributes said changes to the demise of butchering in markets. Instead, today, big packing houses cut whole carcass animals into parts for shipping boxes. That originally implied savings, but where have those savings gone?

Old Station sources their beef from top Iowa farmers and ranchers. The Brinkmeyer Family Ranch is a local family business that prides themselves in food security. All the cattle Old Craft sources from the Brinkmeyers were born and raised on their farm. Whole-carcass beef is delivered, and Old Station's expert butchers cut it to customers' specifications.

Dave Cochran and his daughter, Amy, manage their herd of cattle together. Amy tends to cows and calves in southwestern Iowa. When the calves are weaned, they are brought to Adel, where Dave feeds them until they are ready for market. Dave feeds his cattle ground ear corn. This revivalist method of feeding uses machinery that picks the whole ear of corn and grinds it up for the cattle to eat. This provides both the grain and roughage (from the cob) that cattle need in their diet. Most cattlemen think that Dave's method takes too long to fatten cattle.

HCC Angus Farm is a small Iowa family enterprise owned by Scott and Kit Hansen, in partnership with their daughter, Sophie Hansen. They use Angus seedstock from Woodhill Farms in Viroqua, Wisconsin. The HCC Angus cowherd is annually mated to align the two breeding programs utilizing EPDs (Expected Progeny Differences). EPDs help cattlemen predict the genetic potential for multiple quality traits. This science results in a significantly higher percentage of beef that grades upper Choice or Prime, compared to industry standards.

Lenters Cattle Company was started by Nick Lenters and his brother, Adam Lenters. The Lenters' herd was the inspiration



Aged beef, like this at B&B, is a cherished gift.

for the creation of Old Station Craft Meats. The two brothers partnered in the acquisition of a herd of Lowline Angus cattle. Lowline Angus are 100% Angus cattle, (most "Angus" are closer to 51%) but are smaller in size than today's conventional beef. The Lenters brothers chose the breed because of how efficient they are in producing beef on a strictly grass diet. Smaller cows make smaller steaks, and that is not a bad thing at all in the Old Station school of thought.

Upper Iowa Beef is the last supplier of beef at Old Station. They ship specific parts in boxes rather than delivering whole animals.

Berkwood Farms is a coalition of more than 60 independent family farmers. They are the only farmer-owned pork company with national distribution. They produce Berkshire breed pigs, which is a Heritage breed that generally has more back fat and flavor than non-Heritage breeds.

Steve Kerns, owner of Kerns Farms, is a scientist/farmer from Clearfield. He is focused on acquiring and producing the finest genetics of Berkshire and Mangalitsa breed hogs. Mangalitsa is an Iberian breed that is cherished for its hams. Both breeds are known for their bright red meat and rich marbling.

One hundred percent of Old Station's lamb and goat meat comes from independent central Iowa farmers. Most of the lamb is a result of cross-breeding. This Iowa lamb has a different texture and flavor from the southern hemisphere lamb most Iowans have gotten used to the last 40 years, when the Iowa lamb industry moved west. Lenters says imported lamb does not benefit from the superior feed sources we have in Iowa.

While most lamb producers typically have market-ready lamb available late summer through winter, Brice Hundling has a lambing schedule that allows him to have market-ready lamb available early spring through summer. Since other Iowa sheep farmers follow the traditional lambing schedule, partnership

with the Hundlings allows Old Station to provide locally sourced lamb year-round. Goat meat is a very healthy source of protein that was growing its market share 20 years ago when immigrants wanted it. That has changed, though. The Hundlings also provide goat to Old Station.

Maplecrest Family Farm, owned by the Cronk Family, is a second-generation sheep farm. They maintain a closed flock of Suffolk and Montadale breed sheep. The Cronks raise their sheep with a feeding program focused on a careful selection of pasture, grain and hay.

Ellen Bell founded Bell Farm in 2014 when she and her family moved from the city to the country with two beehives. Today, Ellen manages between 50-500 colonies of bees, depending on the time of year. Bell Farms produces chemical-free honey and also offers a variety of other bee-related products and services.

Prairie Natural Meats and Seafood

Prairie Natural Meats and Seafood, just west of the Des Moines Country Club, is an aggressive importer. Because their sources are wide-ranged, they have things like rabbit, duck, veal and mutton besides beef, lamb, goat, pork and seafood. Owner Ale Vidal Soler is Argentine-born and uses her native contacts to bring Iowa the famous, free-ranged beef of the Pampas. Many times in Europe, after enjoying an exceptional steak, I would be told it was Argentine or Uruguayan beef.

This free-ranged beef is considered healthier than industrial-raised American beef. High levels of Vitamin E and Omega 3 fatty acids are chief reasons for that. This beef will cook a bit faster than supermarket beef. Soler supplies cooking tips and recipes on her website. Irina Khartchenko uses Prairie Natural meats and seafood in her Irina's restaurants.

Prairie Natural's scallops are from Peru and are perhaps the sweetest I have ever tried. Her mussels are New Zealand green lips, which have been widely praised in TV ads for cosmetic treatments.

Lamb is from Australia, New Zealand and Chile. It is all grass-fed. Veal here is grass-fed and "red" in color, indicating it was humanely raised and not force-fed milk. Rabbit and bison are raised humanely in the U.S. Pork is all raised in Iowa.

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Internet-sourced food gift tips

Wisconsin Cheese (www.wisconsincheese.com) recently won 27 first-place awards, 33 second-place awards, and 30 third-place awards at the American Cheese Society. Among winners that impressed were: Klondike Odyssey Peppercorn Feta (www.klondikecheese.com/odyssey-feta), which also comes in seven other flavors; Saxony Alpine (<https://saxoncreamery.com/handcrafted-cheeses/alpine-style-cheese>), which has a hazelnut and butterscotch tone; Red Barn Vintage Cupola (www.redbarnfamilyfarms.com/learn-about-our-cheese-varieties), which tastes a bit like both Gouda and aged Parmesan; and Uplands Pleasant Ridge (<https://uplandscheese.com/product/pleasant-ridge-reserve>), which is a Wisconsin take on famous French Beaufort.

Established in 1787 and operated on the same rolling green vineyards of Emilia-Romagna ever since, Ponti is the top vinegar in Italy. It is available for you now here in the States (<https://www.ponti.com/us>).

To craft their balsamic vinegars — Aceto Balsamico di Modena — Ponti follows strict rules set forth by product specification, which maintains the quality of production in vinegar cellars using grapes only from Lambrusco, Sangiovese, Trebbiano, Albana, Ancellotta, Fortana and Montuni. Ponti



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matures its balsamic in casks of fine wood in cellars at certain temperatures and aeration conditions. The result is a line of vinegars that emulates the product first notably enjoyed by Emperor Henry III in 1046. The standards may be that of royalty, but the product is for everyone looking to invite incredible flavors into their kitchen. ■



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GRATEFUL FOR 'THE GOV'

A close-up photograph of a bowl of pho. The bowl is filled with a clear, light brown broth. Sliced pieces of pork and beef are arranged in the center. Fresh green onions are scattered on top, along with large leaves of fresh cilantro and a large, dark green leaf of basil. The background is a plain white surface.

Bob Ray changed Iowa for the better in many ways, including the diversity of our people and food.

By Jim Duncan

Bob Ray became Governor of Iowa in 1969 and remained so until 1983. He was not the longest on the job, and others got a bigger percentage of the vote, but for most whose lives overlapped his tenure, he was, and will always be, "The Gov." That is especially true of immigrants who were encouraged to come to Iowa like nowhere else.

Pho like this from 515 is the epitome of The Gov's legacy — a mixed pot of goodness.

FOOD DIVERSITY

More than anyone else, Ray changed Iowa for the better in many ways. Before 1969, ethnic diversity in Iowa was a vague dream hiding behind clouds. Food diversity was the sole province of Italians, Amana Colonies Germans, Chinese Americans and African Americans. Cedar Rapids had its Czech Town, Manning had street signs in German, and Irish pubs brought Irish whiskey and beer to Waterloo, Des Moines, Dubuque, Carroll, Elkader, Harlan and Emmetsburg, but Irish cuisine was overwhelmed here. Scandinavian restaurants in Jewell, Roland and Decorah evolved into Scandinavian dishes at church dinners. Greek cafes in Sioux City, Des Moines, Iowa City, Mason City and elsewhere were as often more about coney island dogs as about shawarma or moussaka. The fabulous heirloom restaurant Northwestern Steak House in Mason City was the great exception, though.

The Gov changed Iowa's food ethnicity by sheer force of personality. Before he was elected, I had never seen an avocado in Des Moines. Suddenly, because Ray created the concept of "Iowa nice," we opened our taste buds up to the flavors of Vietnam, Laos, Jalisco, Michoacan, Aguascalientes, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Thailand, Japan, East Africa, West Africa, India and Korea. Winston Churchill said tolerance starts with sharing of foods. Ben Franklin said it was with sharing of wine. Miss Manners wrote that the dinner table was "where tolerance and all forms of polite society, except the minuet, originated." One can argue she is wrong about the minuet, which came into prominence under French king Louis XIV, who also was making French food the envy of the world under his genius chef Francois Vatel. (Both cuisine and the dance feature in the epic movie "Vatel.")

Once Ray opened Iowa to fresh immigrant blood and flavor, there was a saffron rush of new tastes. Ethiopian, Burmese, Argentine, Brazilian, French,



Before Bob Ray, sushi was unknown in Des Moines. Now it is an art form, as this is from W Tao.

Spanish, English, Fujian, southside Chicago, Pakistani, Lebanese, Hawaiian, Russian-American, Bosnian, Texan, North Carolinian, Cajun, Creole, New Mexican and Cuban cafés have opened here.

Mexican restaurants are now the most prolific genre in the metro. They replaced Italian ones, which had replaced Chinese 100 years ago. And cross-cultural traffic is a big, exciting thing. We have taco pizza and BBQ tacos, Korean burritos and kimchi breakfasts. Asian restaurants like Pho 515, Fawn's, Pho All Seasons, Shanghai, Aroy-Dee, Pad Thai Garden, Cool Basil and Thai Flavors all have multiple Asian menus or menus that mix different Asian cuisines. Thai places might include Chinese, Laotian, Vietnamese and Korean menus. Most Indian cafés now have menus of Manchurian dishes. And almost all Indian restaurants here have menus that cover most of India. The newer ones tend to feature cuisine of Andhra Pradesh, especially Hyderabad, where nizams created the legendary Mughal cuisine. Most older ones are more rooted in North Indian cuisine. Yet tandoori (clay oven BBQ) is ubiquitous.

BRING THE BREAD

Before The Gov, bread was utterly boring here. Some old southside Italian bakeries made decent breads. Fancy Breads is still doing it. But the excitement that immigrants brought to town inspired across-the-board bread upgrades. The city now has two businesses making tortillas plus restaurants (Malo, Gateway Market Café, El Fogon, La Baja, Chipotle, Panchero's, etc.) and even supermarkets like La Tapatia making them fresh from scratch. La Mie created a nationally known French bakery here that laminates its croissants multiple times over. South Union Bakery is a mostly Italian place that makes equally lavish breads. Both La Mie and South Union are owned, and were created by, second-generation immigrants from Italy.

That first generation believed a great meal began with good bread, usually complimentary bread baskets. Simon's still provides those, with Fancy Breads. Figuratively, great dining still begins with bread. As soon as people in Des Moines realized that Wonder Bread and Colonial

bread was not the sine qua non of the species, they began bringing back bread from trips to New York and San Francisco. Then La Mie and South Union made that unnecessary.

Sandwich culture took off. When Panera (originally known as St. Louis Bread Company) came to town, they found steep competition from the locals. Today, Manhattan Deli even sells lobster rolls, made generously with the best Maine lobsters.

WHAT'S ON TAP?

As Iowa tastes developed, lobbyists became more aggressive in persuading formerly stuck-in-the mud institutions, like the Iowa Legislature, to approve laxer rules for brewing beer and ale and for distilling local spirits. Scott Carlson of CABCO led that drive. His selling points included the adding of value to Iowa products like grain. Now Iowa produces beers, such as Peace Tree's Femme Fatale, which are as high as 8.5% in alcohol content. The pre-Ray limit was 3.2%. Today, most taverns in town sell double-digit numbers of Iowa tap beers while it is almost impossible to find Budweiser, Miller High Life and Schlitz on tap. Those were America's best-sellers before The Gov shook things up.

Distilleries in Iowa are building customer share in and beyond the state. Templeton Rye began that push with smart advertising



Seafood towers, like this from Mojitos Grill, were Iowa's reward for Bob Ray's kindness.

selling the whiskey as an edgy product that Al Capone approved of a century ago. Mississippi River Distillery capitalized on fresh and local ingredients in their prize-winning gin and whiskey.



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CHARCUTERIE

After years in Parma, Herb and Kathy Eckhouse moved to Des Moines to open La Quercia, a state-of-the-art meat curing company. Des Moines ranks with San Francisco and New York for renowned charcuterie, and La Quercia wins world awards competing with the best Italy and Spain have to offer.

La Quercia, now in Norwalk, produces 10 charcuterie products, nine salamis, three guanciales, three bacon/sausages, two pancetta, plus lomo and lard. Because of La Quercia, Des Moines restaurants now serve charcuterie and cheese boards, and Des Moines diners know the differences amongst speck, lomo, cinta, 'nduja, borsellino and sopresatta. La Quercia even makes a prosciutto made with acorn-fed pigs, a practice they retrieved from ancient times that had disappeared even from Parma after World War II.

NEW, AND REVIVED, FOODS

Once Ray's influence began transforming Iowa taste buds into worldly connoisseurs, the state was ready to try all kinds of new, and revived, foods. Arguably, Iowa now has the most sophisticated local organic dairy industry. Dozens of small organic milk producers surround Kalona, Iowa. Unlike the larger organic dairies of California and Texas, Iowa organic dairies feature serious grazing. Other natural dairies flourish in Woodward, Fairfield, Guthrie County and Milton. Some, like Picket Fence, produce un-homogenized milk. Most, like Kalona, Radiance and Sheeder, homogenize.

Iowa pig farmers form the base of Niman Pork, a division of Niman Ranch. Famous for humanely raised livestock with old-fashioned flavors, Niman can identify the farmer who raised the pork chop you eat in a restaurant, in Des Moines or California. Their motto is "Our pigs only have one bad day."

ATTRACTING TALENT

By the turn of the current century, Iowa restaurants were reaching new levels of renown. Ray's legacy began attracting talented chefs and restaurant owners to the state. Alex Hall is an Australian who sold five New York City cafés, moved to Des Moines and opened five more including St. Kilda's and Franka. Sean



Bob Ray opened the doors of Iowa to Asians and their bounty, like this bamboo tray at MinGaLaBar Burmese Kitchen.

Wilson moved here from North Carolina to open Proof. Matt Steigerwald also moved from North Carolina to open Lincoln Café in Mount Vernon. MJ Gazali is a Lebanese guy who moved here from Hollywood and opened Gazali's.

Andrew Meek came from Wisconsin and opened Sage with John Ross. Jason Simon moved back to Iowa from New Orleans and gave Des Moines Alba, Eatery A, Parlo, Motley School Tavern and, soon, Nico's and The Continental. One of his former chefs, Joe Tripp, moved back from Denver and opened Harbinger and Little Brother. Irina Khartchenko came from Russia and opened Irina's. Chrissy Johnson moved here from Chicago to open Joppa Experience.

French chef David Baruthio moved to Des Moines from Europe to chef for Steve Logsdon at Lucca and would later open Baru 66, Nomad and three other cafés in the metro. Andrew Wilson moved here after stints in Memphis and Healdsburg to run the kitchen at Proudfoot & Bird.

Companies like Orchestrate and Full Court Press kept local talent in town to run eclectic new restaurants. Orchestrate created Centro, South Union Café, Django, Malo, Zombie Burger and Gateway Market Café. Full Court's contributions include Hessen Haus, Royal Mile, Red Monk, Fong's Pizza, The Library, Rita's Cantina, The Chicken, High Life Lounge, Lucky Horse and Buzzard Billy's.

Thank you, Bob Ray. ■



13

FAMILY-FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS

We're not talking about McDonald's. Support these local eateries and have a great time with the family.

By Sofia Legaspi Dickens

Hey, parents — we get it. Maybe you're always wrangling a wriggly toddler or reasoning with a picky eater, but that doesn't mean your family can't enjoy a nice meal out on the town. We've rounded up some of the best family-friendly restaurants in the Des Moines area, in no particular order. Some

offer discounts on kids meals; others simply boast a rockin' kids menu. All of them provide casual, stress-free environments both you and your kids will love. So, next time you don't feel like firing up the crockpot, check out these 13 establishments that are must-tries for families.

Machine Shed's wide menu of American comfort food is a hit with all ages. Photo submitted

1

ZOMBIE BURGER

300 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines
101 Jordan Creek Parkway,
No. 12514, West Des Moines

zombieburgerdm.com

With two locations — in the East Village and Jordan Creek Mall food court — there's no excuse not to try this central Iowa staple. If you've ever craved a burger topped with deep fried macaroni, bananas or a cheese croquette, look no further than the joint's towering "Goremet Bashed Burgers" that might require you to dislocate your jaw. Their shakes are to die for — pun intended — and always hit with the kids. Parents, try them spiked. Kids, try a cereal shake: Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Reese's Puffs or Fruity Pebbles. Sugar rush: initiated.



Zombie Burger's shakes are deadly but delicious. Photo submitted

2

WIG & PEN

2005 S. Ankeny Blvd., Suite 300, Ankeny
wigandpenpizza.com

Possibly the best value in the metro, multiple kids (12 and younger) can eat free on Wednesdays with the purchase of one adult entree. Order from salads, soups, sandwiches, calzones, pasta, fish and chips and other bar food. The star of the show, however, is Wig & Pen's pizza that comes either Chicago style, thin crust or flying tomato — a deep dish version of thin crust pizza. A seeming oxymoron, we know, but so tasty.





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3

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smashpark.com

Pickleball, arcade games, bags (or cornhole or bean bag toss), foosball, giant board games, shuffleboard, bocce ball, ping pong and loads of fun. Oh, and there's food. The kids menu includes all the classics the little ones love, but they'll want to explore the grown-up side of the menu that includes crunchy flatbreads, savory handhelds and beefy burgers. A long list of shareables are begging for families to order them. Try the "sheet ton of nachos" or pull-apart Hawaiian garlic bread.



Weekend brunches at Smashpark are 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and feature \$3 breakfast cocktails and mouth-watering menu items. Pictured are breakfast nachos, french toast sticks, chilaquiles, breakfast pizza and a breakfast burrito. Photo submitted

4

SMOKEY D'S5055 N.W. Second St.,
Des Moines

smokeydsbbq.com

BBQ comes in epic proportions at Smokey D's.

Order an entire rack of ribs or a family platter of smoked meat, garlic bread and sides that might include tater chips, jalapeno corn and baked beans, just to name a few. If your family doesn't feel like sharing, you can each order just-right portions of BBQ, sandwiches or other Iowan comfort food — all enjoyed in a casual, family-friendly atmosphere.

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5

DESTINATION GRILLE

2491 E. First St., Grimes
destinationgrille.com

Designed to inspire thoughts of travel and global destinations, this recently opened contemporary restaurant offers three different levels of ambiance. The main level serves a full menu of American food with unique twists. An upstairs terrace offers a lighter menu with shareable items perfect for families, and the rooftop offers panoramic views of Grimes. Kids menu includes chicken strips, mac and cheese, pasta, a cheeseburger and pizza. Featured specials change frequently, so come back often!

6

MACHINE SHED

11151 Hickman Road, Urbandale
machineshed.com

Serving up good, old fashioned comfort food, even the pickiest eaters will find something to love at Machine Shed. Their "Future Farmers" menu includes breakfast, lunch and dinner favorites. Kids younger than age 5 eat free during their weekend brunch buffets, Saturdays and Sundays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Plus, their overalls-wearing servers are the friendliest around.

7

CHUCK'S RESTAURANT

3610 Sixth Ave., Des Moines
facebook.com/ChucksRestaurant

They may have recently renovated, but Chuck's has been serving up their famous thin-crust pizzas since 1956, claiming to have the oldest pizza ovens in town. Kids younger than 12 eat free on Tuesdays with any paying adult. Don't forget to try their award-winning onion rings and homemade Italian specialties. Thursday nights feature music that sometimes includes kid-friendly karaoke. Finally, if you need a place to host your kid's next birthday party, Chuck's offers three party rooms at no charge.

8

SPAGHETTI WORKS

310 Court Ave., Des Moines
spaghettilworks.com

Who doesn't love spaghetti? And furthermore, who doesn't love all-you-can-eat spaghetti? That's right — all pasta menu items are refillable. And if that isn't your thing, try Italian specialties like chicken parmesan, hot Italian pie or Tuscan-style pizza. On Mondays, ages 11 and younger eat free from the kids menu that includes — get this — a peanut butter and jelly pizza!



Spaghetti Works offers a warm, welcoming atmosphere with a vintage feel — including a salad bar served in an old fire truck. Photo submitted



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9

THE HALL DSM

111 S. 11th St., West Des Moines
thehalldsm.com

For the parents, The Hall serves more than 50 varieties of beer and wine on tap. For the kids, the place includes board games, frequent live music events and wide open indoor and outdoor spaces in a reclaimed 1890s railcar barn and iron foundry. "The Kitchen" offers rotating menus of unique meals from the Justice League of Food, fighting to reduce homelessness in Iowa by providing food industry experience.

10

Z'MARIKS NOODLE CAFE

12655 University Ave., Clive
zmariks.com

Fresh and healthy bowls of noodles, rice, soup and salad. "Z'Mariks" comes from the Greek word for pasta, "zimarika." Besides being fun to say, it's just plain fun to eat! Stick with the classics like z'alfredo and z'pesto, or challenge your adventurous side with z'udon and z'spicy peanut. Kids 12 and younger eat free every Saturday — all day — with each adult meal purchased. Favorites for the little ones include z'mac n cheese, z'buttered penne and z'marinara.



Z'Mariks smothers its classic macaroni bowl in their trademark blend of melted cheeses. Photo submitted

11

SOCIAL - EATS & CRAFTS

655 N.E. 56th St., Pleasant Hill
greatestescapeiowa.com

Social is located in Great Escape, which includes bowling, an arcade, laser tag, virtual reality and endless family fun — voted the best place to host a kids birthday party and the best place to bowl in CITYVIEW's annual Best Of Des Moines readers' poll. At Social, kids 12 and younger eat free with a paid adult on Tuesday nights from 5 to 9 p.m., but you'll want to come back more than once a week for its flavorful menu and dozens of brews on tap.



Great Escape and its restaurant, Social - Eats & Crafts, are ideal locations for birthday parties. Photo submitted

12 SHORTE'S BBQ

8805 Chambers Blvd., Suite 250,
Johnston

shortesbbq.com

The menu at ShortE's is anything but short, with jaw-dropping offerings like ShortE's Bacon Bomb: ground sausage wrapped in smoked bacon and filled with jalapenos and cheese. Have a big family? Try the Texas Family Feast. It feeds up to 10 people and includes 3 pounds of meat, a full rack of ribs, 3 quarts of sides and eight pieces of cornbread or Texas toast. Wowza.

13 GILROY'S KITCHEN + PUB + PATIO

1238 Eighth St., West Des Moines

gilroyskitchen.com

All-you-care-to-eat brunch is served Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Loaded scrambled eggs, crispy potatoes, cinnamon roll bread pudding, corn flake French toast and more — all served family-style to your table. Adults cost \$21.99, kids ages 7-12 cost \$11.99 and little ones younger than age 6 eat free. Plus, if you're a redhead, you'll receive star treatment and 10% off. ■



Gilroy's unlimited brunch spread is a local favorite for families. Photo submitted

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State of the art of the state's restaurants

By Jim Duncan

Government economists, if that is not an oxymoron, argue that we don't have stagflation yet because unemployment isn't ugly enough. Tell that to the restaurant industry.

"For the first time in history, we have seen both a 15% rise in product costs and a 15% reduction in labor the last six months. We are still really struggling," explains Iowa Restaurant Association chief **Jessica Dunker**.

Where did all the workers go? There are also labor shortages among nurses, teachers, life guards, airline workers, truck drivers, Uber drivers, police, soldiers and highway construction employees.

"Before COVID, the strongest segment of the restaurant workforce was people 55 and older. Many of them didn't have to work, but they worked because they enjoyed it. COVID spooked them enough that I don't think they are returning to the jobs. People simply learned how to live on 'enough,' by foregoing vacations, new appliances, new cars, etc.," Dunker said.

"In our industry, that explains a lot of statistics we see. People are still going out to eat, but they are foregoing things like appetizers. They are having one drink instead of three. The average ticket price is down more than the number of customers," she added.

Wendy's tore down a restaurant on Grand Avenue in West Des Moines during COVID. They built an attractive new building there. Recently they reopened, but they close daily at 4 p.m. Why spend all that money and reopen without dinner service? Don't families eat fast food burgers for dinner anymore?

"That is entirely a worker shortage thing. Restaurants are trying to cope by reducing hours, shortening menu sizes, which is good thing, and reducing the number of days they are open," Dunker told us.

THE GOOD NEWS

Jenny Lee's Korean Kitchen opened on E.P True...

MinGaLaBar Burmese Kitchen opened on Douglas... **The Breakfast Club** opened a second store, in West Des Moines...

Irina's opened a second restaurant, between West Glen and Jordan Creek, with an emphasis of steaks and seafood... **300 Burger** opened by the baseball park... Lynn Pritchard opened

503: A Drink Lab & Tasting Room on East Locust and plans to reopen **Table 128** just south of downtown soon...

Cinnaholic opened in East Village... **Crumbl Cookies** opened in Ankeny... **Parlor** opened in the former Saint's in Beaverdale, with Detroit-style pizza... **Tupelo Honey** opened downtown... **Maggie's Rumble Room** opened in the former Sambetti's...

Tony Lemmo announced he would open a new restaurant in the former Whiskey River on Ingersoll... **Bar Nico** opened in the former Continental... **The Continental** relocated to the former Dirt Burger... **Big Grove Brewery and Taproom** opened on 17th north of Ingersoll... **Twisted Vine Brewery** moved from West Des Moines to East Village... **Chicken Shack** opened on East Euclid... **Slim Chickens** opened a store in Ankeny... **Sugar Freakshow** opened on S.W. Ninth... **Destination Grille** opened in Grimes.

THE BAD NEWS

Gusto closed their original store on Ingersoll after 10 years...

Whiskey River closed its Ingersoll store after late night violence.

TALES OF THE COCKTAIL NEWS

In July, **New Orleans** went all out to establish itself as America's cocktail city. Already the home of the American Cocktail Museum, the only part of the Smithsonian not in the District of Columbia, they hosted Tales of the Cocktail (TOTC), a weeklong celebration of spirits. TOTC is a walking tour of the cocktails of New Orleans with tasting rooms, seminars and Mardi-Gras-sized parties.

Some stars of the show included **Faretti Biscotti Famosi Liqueur**, an Italian liqueur with the taste of liquid biscotti, anise and nuts; **Cut Above Zero Proof** Mezcal, Tequila, and Gin; **OldKnow Absinthe Hard Seltzer**; **Absinthia** absinthe, which is made with California biodynamic grapes, distilled using organic botanicals. The result is a trio of absinthes that are balanced rather than bitter. This woman-owned company makes a bright Absinthe Blanche, a traditional Absinthe Verte, and a rich, honeyed barrel-aged Absinthe. Ernest Hemmingway invented Death in the Afternoon, a cocktail made with Verte and champagne. ■

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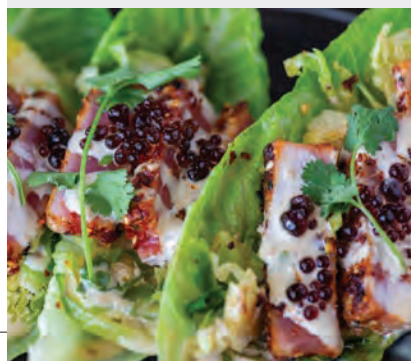
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