

MYSTERY DINER

Restaurant reviews

The Chew Chew tracks all the right notes

RIVERSIDE - There are restaurants and then there are neighborhood institutions. The Chew Chew in Riverside is the latter.

On a recent night, The Chew Chew was full of locals: a gathering of schoolteachers, buddies grabbing a burger and catching a Bulls game, and even a village official out for a quiet dinner with his wife.

The presence of locals at The Chew Chew is unsurprising, because if you ask anyone in Riverside where to head for dinner, this place makes the list. The Chew Chew serves the community in multiple contexts. The menu references awards for best neighborhood joint; food-forced social media websites rate it highly as a spot for locals and visitors alike; and the restaurant regularly gives generously to local causes and nonprofits.

Just like Riverside itself, The Chew Chew is full of history and local mythology, and is, in a word: classic. That's not bad for a place founded in 1988.

But enough about all that; let's talk food.

The Chew Chew's menu strikes a nice balance between bar food and a higher end steakhouse. An \$11 burger sits comfortably on the menu next to mid-priced pasta dishes, \$30 steaks and rotating market fish. But with a twist, the menu also offers items not regularly seen on suburban menus, such as escargot, pate and srachini pickles.

To get started, I ordered baked onion soup and one of the night's specials: duck pate on crostini (toast) with pickled onion and crumbled, hard-boiled egg.

The soup arrived first - hot, but not boiling - with a crispy layer of Swiss cheese sitting atop croissants floating on pure onion goodness. On a frigid night, it was the perfect first course to beat the chill: a good balance of broth and onion - hearty without being heavy.

About the time I was finishing, my duck pate special arrived. When opportunity and mood align, always go with the special. It's generally special for a reason. The pate did not disappoint. The pink, pickled onions added a subtle sweetness and color that struck a pleasing note. The side arugula salad with halved grapes was a welcome accompaniment, as I alternated bites.

For my main dish, I



The Chew Chew on Burlington Street in Riverside is a restaurant where locals love to go.

The Chew Chew

- Where: 33 E. Burlington St., Riverside
- Hours: 5 to 9 p.m. Monday; 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday; 4 to 9 p.m. Sunday
- Dress code: Casual
- Info: 708-447-8781, www.thechewchew.com

More photos online

To see more photos from The Chew Chew, find this story online at PlantLife.com.



Cooked perfectly to order is skirt steak with chimichurri, served with spicy aioli and shoestring french fries at The Chew Chew in Riverside.



Pickled onion and crumbled egg garnish the duck pate on crostini, complemented by arugula salad with grape halves for a tasty balance of flavors.

struggled with a decision between a perne pasta made with roasted chicken, tomato, applewood bacon and smoked Gouda cream vs. the grilled skirt steak and chimichurri. I ended up going with the steak, but know I'll be back for the perne.

Whiskey and steak are a marriage made in heaven, so I ordered up Knob Creek neat, and made fine work of the meal. The steak was requested

medium rare and arrived medium rare. Juicy and flavorful with a side of shoestring french fries and a spicy aioli, it was exactly what I hoped it would be.

I wanted badly to do dessert, but didn't leave room. If I had, I might have ordered another special that night: eggnog (the adult kind).

But, missed dishes and specials are just another reason to return, this time

with a partner (maybe a local resident), so I can sample their choices as well.

If you go where the locals go, you can't go wrong.

The *Mystery Diner* is a newsroom employee at *Suburban Life Media*. The diner's identity is not revealed to the restaurant staff before or during the meal. Only positive dining experiences will result in published reviews.

Questions? Email msleditoria@shawmedia.com

EVENTS



A LOOK AT AREA EVENTS THIS WEEK



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ONGOING

"Hello, Dolly!" At Drury Lane Theatre, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace. Through Jan. 5. "Hello, Dolly!" is the story of one-of-the-century widowed matchmaker Dolly Gallagher Levi, who, after cunningly negotiating marriages for others through a series of comic romantic entanglements, ultimately finds her own match. The performance schedule is as follows: Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m. (\$35), Thursdays at 1:30 p.m. (\$35) and 8 p.m. (\$45), Fridays at 8 p.m. (\$45), Saturdays at 5 p.m. (\$45) and 8:30 p.m. (\$45), and Sundays at 2 p.m. (\$45) and 8 p.m. (\$45). Lunch and dinner theatre packages range from \$50 to \$74 depending on the day of the week. For information, visit www.drurylane.com.

Carl Sandburg Exhibit, 1 to 5 p.m., Tuesdays through Sundays through April 20, Elmhurst Historical Museum, 120 E. Park Ave., Elmhurst. This exhibit explores the years from 1920 until 1930 when Sandburg lived in Elmhurst and worked in the "City of Big Shoulders" - a decade that was one of the most prolific of Sandburg's career. His story is told through rare photos, film clips, touch-screen interactives, and an array of boxed artifacts. Admission is free. For information, visit www.elmhursthistory.org.

"A Christmas Carol," Drury Lane Theatre, 100 Drury Lane, Oakbrook Terrace. Select dates through Dec. 21. Tickets are \$15 each. Breakfast with Santa is available before or after performances Saturdays in Dec.; tickets are \$30 for ages 13 and up and \$25 for 12 and under (includes performance and buffet). For information, visit www.drurylane.com.

Enchanted Railroad, 5 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Jan. 5, Morton Arboretum, 4100 Route 53, Lisle. This intricate railroad travels through an indoor winter wonderland. Free timed tickets with Arboretum admission; first come, first served. For information, visit www.mortonarb.org.

Illumination Tree Lights at the Morton Arboretum, The Morton Arboretum, 4100 Route 53, Lisle. This holiday season, don't miss the arboretum's unique winter lights event. Illumination offers a holiday experience far beyond traditional twinkle lights, engaging your senses with dazzling projections, trees that respond to your touch and voice, and vivid, electric colors throughout. See trees in a different light, along a mile-long, paved trail around the Arboretum's Meadow Lake and down the Cooler Walk. For information, visit www.mortonarb.org.

DEC. 20

Candy Cane Hunt, 6 to 6:45 p.m. Friday, Terrace View Park, 17063



Photo provided by Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

IN A TWO-HORSE OPEN SLEIGH

WHERE: Danada Equestrian Center, 25507 Naperville Road, Wheaton
WHEN: Noon to 2 p.m. Dec. 25 to 30, and noon to 3 p.m. Sundays in January and February
COST & INFO: Horse-drawn sleigh rides are offered all winter by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County. Bells jingle merrily as the center's draft horses pull the sleigh over the fields and through the woods for 15-minute rides, departing every 20 minutes. A fire warms participants. For less than 4 inches of snow on the trail, a hay wagon is used instead. Tickets are available at Danada's main barn beginning at 11:30 a.m. on ride days, and cost \$5 per adult, and \$2 for ages 5 to 12, by cash or check. Groups of 25 or more can reserve private rides, plus guided barn tours, at 630-668-6812. Visit www.dupagefarm.com.

Hodges Rd, Oakbrook Terrace. Enjoy holiday fun while hunting for candy canes with flashlights. Warm up with hot chocolate after the hunt. Dress for the weather and bring flashlights and seek for candy canes. Pre-registration is required. Cost is \$10 for residents and \$13 for non-residents.
Holiday Breakfast, 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Friday, Advocate Good Samaritan Health & Wellness Center, 3550 Highland Ave., Downers Grove. Includes entertainment and hot breakfast. Cost is \$2 and advance registration required. For information, call 630-325-9822.

DEC. 21

Breakfast with Santa, 10:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, Recreation & Aquatic Center, 21W730 Butterfield Road, Lombard. Includes pancake breakfast buffet and photos with Santa. \$9 per person; register in advance. For information, call 630-658-2223 or visit www.butterfieldpa.com.

The Twelve Days of Christmas, 3 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Gregg House Museum, 125 S. Linden Ave., Westmont. See Christmas trees to match the lyrics of the beloved holiday song. Earn a small prize when you play the fun, mystery holiday game. Children can make a small craft to take home. For information, visit www.gp4fun.org.

Live Nativity, 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, through Christmas Day, Christ Church of Oak Brook, 501 Oak Brook Road, Oak Brook. All are welcome. For information, call 630-468-2400 or visit www.ccob.org.

A Grinch Hobnobbing, 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Administration Building, 55

E. Richmond Street, Westmont. We'll be playing Grinch Games in Whoville like the Snowball Toss, Grinch Gift Towers, the Grinch Skibee and making Grinch crafts and treats. Play games inside, then bundle up and take a ride around the neighborhood to enjoy the holiday lights on the Long Eared Males Mages. Free admission. For information, visit www.gp4fun.org.

Holiday Ballroom Dance with Vito Magrone, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Ballroom City, 207 S. Villa Ave., Villa Park. Includes a Waltz lesson, potluck and festivities. DJ Sante will be playing ballroom favorites. Singles, couples and dancers of every skill level, beginner to advanced, are all welcome. Parking is free. Admission is \$10. Lesson is at 7:30 p.m. and open dance begins at 8 p.m. For information, visit www.just-dance.us.

Acoustic Salsabice Show, 8 p.m. Saturday, Unitarian Church of Hinsdale, 11 W. Maple Street, Hinsdale. Featuring Joe Jimco, Edie Carey, and Heather Styka performing lush harmonies on original songs as well as songs of the season. Tickets are \$18 for adults and \$16 for seniors and students. For information, call 630-941-7797 or visit www.ucahinsdale.com.

Breakfast with Santa at the Morton Arboretum, 9 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Sunday and Monday, Morton Arboretum, 4100 IL Route 53, Lisle. Children will enjoy a special breakfast, meet with Santa and receive a gift. Tickets are \$10 for member adults, \$16 for non-member adults, \$27 for member child (3-12), or \$32 for non-member child. Children ages 2 and under are free. Photos include gratuity and taxes. Register in advance at this

with out quickly. For information, call 630-725-2066 or visit www.mortonarb.org.

DEC. 23

Candy Cane Hunt, 10 a.m. Monday, Main Street Recreation Center, 501 Hill Ave., Glen Ellyn. It's a candy cane-filled morning. All of indoor crafts and an outdoor candy cane hunt. Dress for the weather. For ages 2-8. For information, visit gpcpark.org.

DEC. 24

Christmas Eve Service, Tuesday, Grace Lutheran Church, 423 Forest Ave., Glen Ellyn. Grace Lutheran Church will hold Christmas Eve Services at 4 and 10 p.m. Communion will be served and community residents are invited. The later service will be led by the choir. For information, call 630-465-1555.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship, 4 p.m. Tuesday, Downers Grove Community Church, 6600 Oakview, Downers Grove. The Downers Grove Community Church will offer a Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship with a message of "Christmas Joy" and carols. Child care provided. For information, call 630-960-3320 or visit www.dgccc.org.

DEC. 25

Christmas Service, 10 a.m. Wednesday, Grace Lutheran Church, 403 Forest Ave., Glen Ellyn. Grace Lutheran Church will host a Christmas Service featuring many traditional carols and hymns as well as communion. For information, call 630-460-1555.