

Buckhorn's menu goes upscale

By Norm Starks

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MILTON

In this part of the country, dining lakeside is a popular destination. What could be more pleasant than to enjoy a fine meal with a view of a lake? With the numerous lakes in our area, it's easy to find several restaurants offering that opportunity.

One of the best lakeside restaurants is the Buckhorn Supper Club, located on the south end of Lake Koshkonong just a few miles north of Milton. The Buckhorn has been around more than 60 years, and Chico and Dawn Pope continue to make it a great place to dine. It's a family affair, with daughter Shelley managing the front end of the restaurant and son Kevin serving as chef.

We hadn't visited for about seven years, so there was a little bit of sticker shock when we saw some of the prices. They've gone up! But what hasn't in that time period? The important thing is that the quality of food also has gone up, making the increased prices more palatable.

The restaurant is located on Charley's Bluff, named after Alexander Charles Vieux, an early French settler and fur trader. In those early days, the area was inhabited by several tribes of American Indians and was known for the ample crop of wild rice that abounded in the low-lying marshy areas along the Rock River. When the Indianford Dam was built in 1846, the lake formed and the wild rice disappeared beneath the lake's surface.

The Buckhorn is a bit different from most Wisconsin supper clubs, which traditionally offer more bar foods and less fine-dining selections. And while the Popes continue to offer traditional steak and chicken dishes, they've also introduced more fresh fish and other dishes.

"Prime rib has always been our signature," Chico Pope said. "But we're seeing more demand for fresh seafood, and so we've tried to follow the trend."

On a recent visit, our party of four sampled three different entrées: a fillet of fresh broiled tilapia with a Dijon pecan sauce (\$18.95), an 8-ounce filet mignon (\$18.95) and a kids' menu chicken strips dinner (\$10.75).

There are some great appetizers for those with big appetites,



such as crab cakes with remoulade sauce or deep-fried Canadian bluegill fillets, but we refrained, knowing we'd never be able to eat it all.

Hot bread and our first course of soup and salads arrived quickly. I had selected the homemade clam chowder and found it to be still as delicious as before. It's a hearty chowder with lots of flavor and richness. The salads were fresh and crisp with a nice selection of veggies.

Our server was nicely attentive during our evening, and she cleared our plates with excellent timing before bringing the entrées. All of them were good. The fillets were tender and cooked to order. I especially loved the tilapia. I'm not a fan of Dijon sauces, but the slightly tart sauce mixed with toasted pecans was the perfect complement to the mild flavor of tilapia. Outstanding!

Our granddaughter's chicken strips also were quite good.

We opted for two desserts from

the luscious-looking dessert tray—a Snickers pie and a slice of Kevin's homemade chocolate peanut butter pie. Both were really good, though quite rich. They'd be easy to share.

Prices are up about 30 percent since we were last here, but the quality of food makes the increase endurable.

Other lakeside restaurants in the area:

Grandview Restaurant

Geneva Inn, N2009 S. Lake Shore Drive, Lake Geneva, offering elegant fine dining with an outstanding view of Geneva Lake. Prices: \$25-\$38. Telephone: (262) 248-5680.

Café Calamari

Highway 67 and Geneva Street, Williams Bay, offering an outstanding selection of genuine Italian fare. Prices: \$15-\$30. Telephone: (262) 245-9865.

Bertrand's Point Comfort Place

N52W35002 Lake Drive, Okauchee, a relaxing and rustic place offering good supper club food, including some great barbecued ribs. Prices: \$6-\$25. Telephone: (262) 569-9700.

Rock on the River Bar and Grill

101 Maple Ave., Beloit, an upscale bar and grill with boat slips just outside the windows on the Rock River. Prices: \$6-\$15. Telephone: (608) 363-7625.

Norm Starks is a free-lance writer who writes entertainment stories and reviews regional restaurants for the Gazette.

The Buckhorn Supper Club

Location: 11802 Charley Bluff Road, Milton.

Telephone: (608) 868-2653.

Hours: 4-9 p.m. Thursday; 4-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday; noon-9 p.m. Sunday.

Reservations: Accepted (Friday nights for parties of five or more).

Credit cards: Accepted.

Non-smoking area: Dining room is non-smoking.

Wheelchair accessible: Yes.

Vegetarian entrées on menu: Yes.

Heart-healthy items on menu: No.

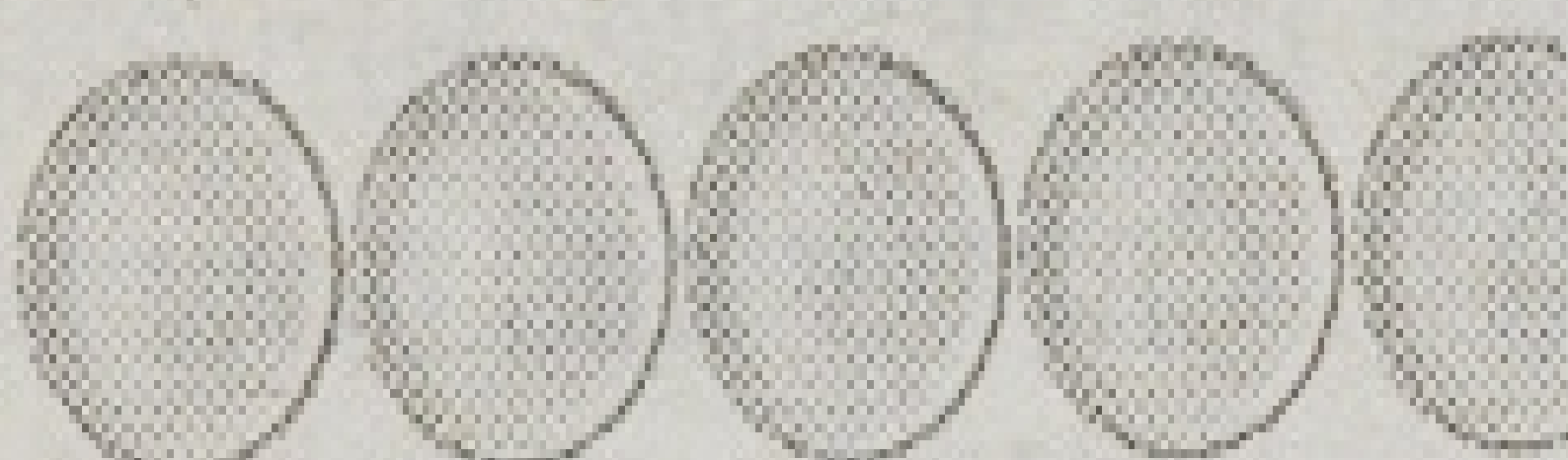
Alcohol served: Yes.

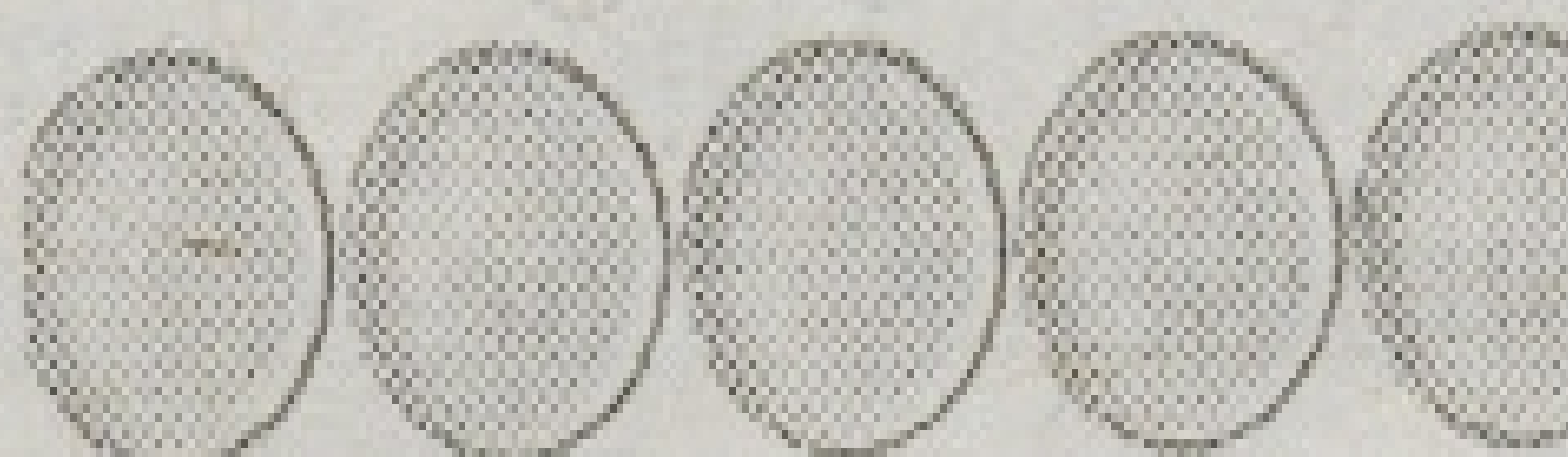
Signature: Prime rib, fresh fish.

Menu: Several great appetizers will get you started, ranging from \$6.95 for a half order of onion rings to \$15.95 for baked brie with garlic shrimp. Beef selections include prime rib and four other steak dinners. Barbecued pork ribs, chicken, pork chops and a vegetarian pasta alfredo also

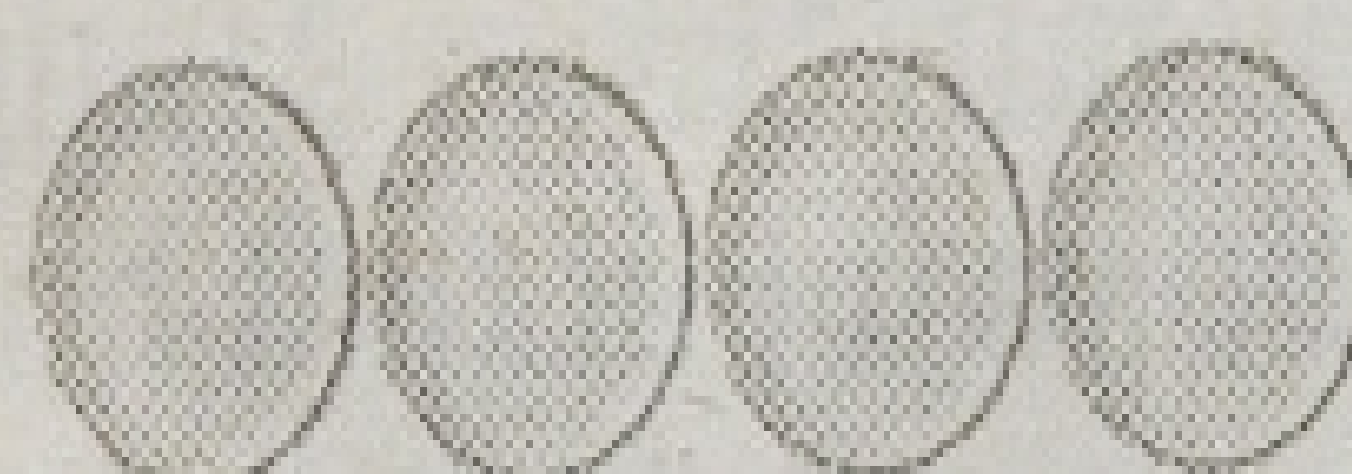
are offered. Several choices of fresh seafood always are present with some great specials on Friday nights. A popular summer activity is the monthly live lobster boils on the last Wednesday of each month through September. Cost is \$47 per person and includes live Maine lobsters, a selection of wines, several sides and dessert. Advanced reservations are required. Wine tastings also are offered July 12 and Aug. 9. Visit www.thebuckhorn.net.

Ratings

Food: 

Service: 

Cost: \$10.95-\$27.95.

Value: 

5 plates—Outstanding

4 plates—Above average

3 plates—Average

2 plates—Below average

1 plate—Poor