The Lost Art of the Supper Club

OLD SCHOOL COMMUNAL DINING IS ALIVE & WELL IN WISCONSIN

THE OPPOSITE OF COOKIE CUTTER, WISCONSIN'S STILL-THRIVING SUPPER CLUBS PROVIDE A WINDOW INTO THE PAST AND A COMMUNAL CULINARY EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER.

SUPPER CLUB FAST FACTS

As of 2020, you'll find at least **250 supper clubs** in Wisconsin.

Each supper club is different. But the classic schedule is generally the same: Friday fish fry, Saturday prime rib, Sunday Broasted chicken and ribs.

At traditional supper clubs, **the bar opens at 4 p.m. and dinner service starts at 5 p.m.** (though some establishments now open for lunch).

Many of the oldest supper clubs began as simple roadhouses with more choices of alcohol than food. (As a result, they were popular with mobsters back in the day).

A long wait is part of the supper club culture. Think of it as destination dining, where your fellow diners are just friends you haven't met yet.

Supper club décor often reflects local history or local passions - like taxidermy, when in wildlife-rich hunting locales, or nostalgic old-world vibes. Cozy fireplaces roar in the winter.

While supper club culture is rooted in the past, recent years have seen **new spins on the tradition,** offering vegetarian options, artisanal cheeses, local craft beer and more.

TRAVEL WISCONSIN

SUPPER CLUB ESSENTIALS

A **relish tray** is a serving platter filled with pickles, olives, fresh vegetables and other finger foods.

What the heck is **Broasted chicken**? It's somewhere between pressure cooked and fried, using the recipes and technology from the Wisconsin-based Broaster Co. The combination results in chicken that is unbelievably tender and juicy.

The **Brandy Old Fashioned** is a supper club staple and Wisconsin's unofficial cocktail. Ordered either "sweet" or "sour," it's a hand-muddled cocktail of brandy, bitters, sugar, orange and cherries that tastes great.

The **Lazy Susan** is a rotating tray which comes to the table topped with deliciousness, like liver sausage, deviled eggs, cheese spreads and smoked fish.

Supper club **ice cream drinks** are kind of like boozy milkshakes, only thicker: A spoon is more useful than a straw when indulging. And they're big enough to share. Try the Pink Squirrel, which was invented at Bryant's Cocktail Lounge in Milwaukee.

ICONIC SUPPER CLUBS

Lehman's Supper Club (Rice Lake): This fourth-generation family business began in 1934 as a bar serving hot roast beef sandwiches. Chicken dinner, served family style, is a longtime Sunday special.

Mars Resort (Lake Geneva): Nestled on the shores of Lake Como, Mars Resort features a large outdoor patio descending onto a gorgeous beach. The inside of the restaurant and bar has a quintessential supper club atmosphere, with a piano bar player every Friday and Saturday.

Chissy's Pub & Grille (Waldo): What began as a roadside bar in the 1970s, halfway between Milwaukee and Green Bay, has steadily expanded to meet customer cravings. One example: prime rib, the special three nights per week.

Buckhorn Supper Club (Milton): Originally a burger-beer-bait joint in the 1930s, you can float to the Buckhorn via boat on Lake Koshkonong. One of the most popular events here is the occasional live lobster boil.

The Ranch Supper Club (Hayward): Popular with lumberjacks, timber tycoons and Chicago gangsters during the 1930s, The Ranch is a storied establishment in this Northwoods community. Throughout the decades, they've been known for good food, honest drinks and Wisconsin hospitality.

HobNob (Racine): Nurse a cocktail as the moon rises over Lake Michigan, amidst lush fabrics and furnishings that smack of art deco. Turn the clock back with roasted duckling to 10-scoop grasshopper drinks.

Ishnala (Wisconsin Dells): Sitting atop a bluff in Mirror Lake State Park, Ishnala boasts views of both the beautiful waterfront and the surrounding Norway pine forest. Savor thick, tender steaks while relishing the rustic elegance - part of the property's original, century-old log cabin survives.