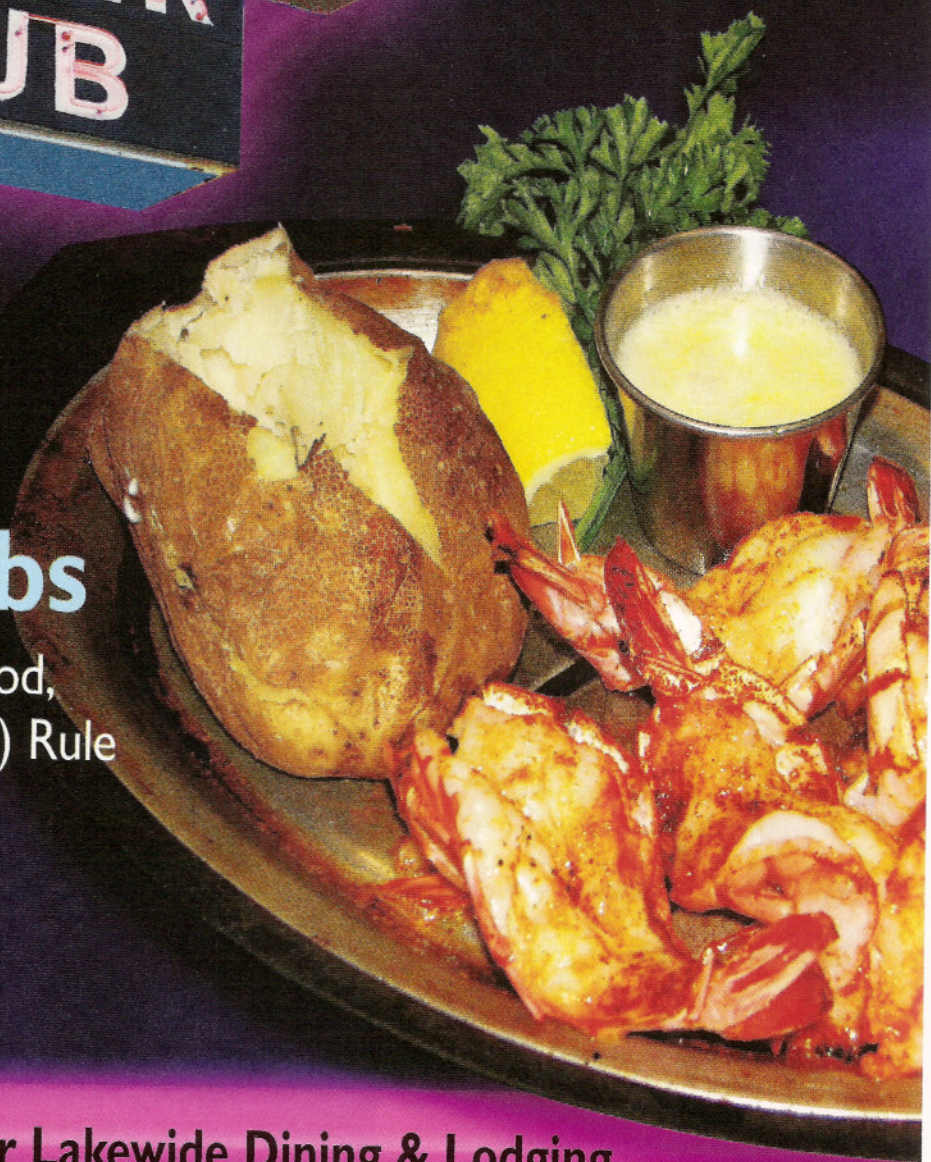


Lake Superior Magazine's
**Restaurant & Lodging
Guide**



Supper Clubs

Where Steaks, Ribs, Seafood,
Potatoes (and Relish Trays) Rule



Fully Updated Listings for Lakewide Dining & Lodging

A Dining Tradition
Lives On around
Lake Superior

Supper Clubs

by Tom Wilkowske

Supper clubs have been around for a long, long time. I'm positive that the first supper club was formed by cave neighbors, who, sitting around their fires, noticed that one of them had meat, another had tubers, a third had fermented berry juice and the fourth had just made a shrieking sound by blowing into a hollow reed.

"Ugh. Eat, drink, music. Good," said the leader on that fine prehistoric evening, and voilà, the supper club was born.

Fast forward to early last century, when Milwaukee native Lawrence Frank opened the first supper club in Beverly Hills, California – or so says the Wisconsin Historical Society. Zip to the 1920s, when bootleggers opened speakeasies in the countryside that offered beverages, entertainment and food ... in that order.

Stroll through the decades following and cruise through Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan, where supper clubs became known as swanky spots where folks got dressed up to have a nice meal, where plates groaned with beef and seafood, where the lounge served brandy old-fashioned and where a multitiered, rotating relish tray adorned every table.

Speaking of old-fashioned: Some supper-club purists insist on strict definitions – open only for the evening meal offered with soup or



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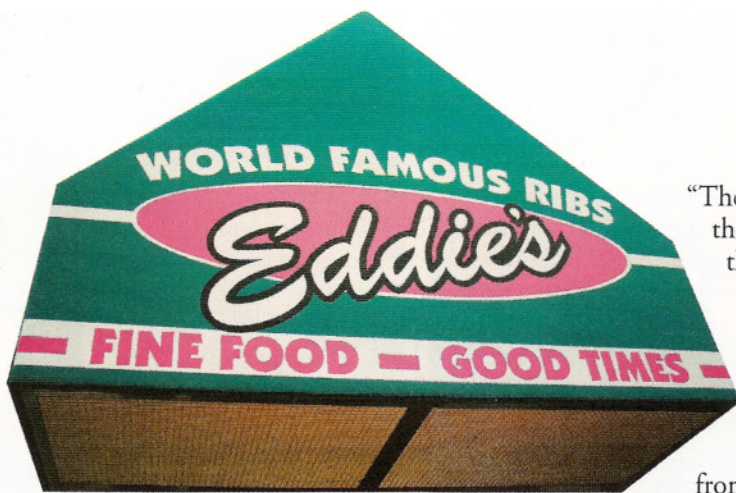
Dreamland owners Dan and Terri Patterson deliver a traditional supper-club style and

tomato juice and waitresses only named Gladys, Madge and Vy. And that relish tray.

Others have a broader view: A place that has a touch of class, good food and a lot of it, plus a friendly vibe.

That's the image most people of a certain age conjure when they think "supper club." These meat-meal based restaurants are not to be confused with the new informal gatherings of cutting-edge "foodies" that they call "supper clubs," nor are our supper clubs the elite members-only clubs sprouting up in New York, Los Angeles and European capitals.

No, I went looking for restaurants that feel like a club, but are open to all, that are nice but not opulent, that focus less on herding



"The history goes at least into the '20s, but we can't for the life of us figure out when it was actually built. It was a speakeasy during Prohibition," says Dan Patterson, Dreamland co-owner and

front-of-house man, who runs the place with his wife and chef, Terri.

"I talked to a lady who said she was a waitress in the '30s," Dan says. "She said she made \$100 a night – in the '30s you know, more than executives made those days. And I said, 'How the heck'd you do that?' And she said her customers were all bootleggers and hookers. They had a lot of cash and they were generous."

In the old days, supper clubs were known for live entertainment.

you through and more on letting you relax and enjoy yourself for a few hours. And I found them.

One longtime Lake Superior establishment, Dreamland Supper Club in rural Superior, boasts a distinguished supper-club pedigree.

President Calvin Coolidge is said to have frequented the place when he set up his "Summer White House" in Superior to fish the Brule River.

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Although that has faded, the supper club ethos is still about relaxing, Dan says. It's about being served in courses – soup or juice, salad, entree, dessert – and, the relish tray.

“We’re the only ones in this area that still do the relish tray. I hear people come out here, and they get it. ‘Oh my God, it’s like the old supper clubs.’ In a lot of people’s minds, that’s what it represents.”

Dan says his restaurant is busy on holiday weekends and with occasional weddings, but adds that “95 percent of the time it’s okay for people to come and hang out for an hour before they even think of ordering.”

There’s another Lake Superior area Dreamland with rich history: the Dreamland Restaurant and Bar near Lake Linden in Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula.

Norbert Sarazin spent two years building his lumberjack boarding house and tavern before opening it in 1913. It closed during World War II and reopened as a restaurant in 1947

with the addition of electricity and plumbing. Norbert’s grandchildren, Lori Ambuehl and Todd Sarazin, now run the restaurant.

“Our Friday fish fry is our big draw,” says Lori. “It has been since 1950 or so.”

The Sarazins used to serve up a lot more steak and seafood. They also used to serve herring, both hand-pickled and batter-fried. Now lunch is gaining popularity, along with sandwiches, burgers and entrees in the \$4 to \$15 range.

Lori gives a wistful nod to the history of relish trays. “They used to go out on all the tables,” she says, but no more.

Her restaurant still embodies the old-fashioned supper club notions of cooking from scratch and being a destination, rather than a drive-by, restaurant. The closest town is Lake Linden, which is eight miles by water, and the supper club’s large dock and location on Portage Lake make it popular with small and large vessels alike.



Another U.P. spot sounds a lot like a supper club menu, though Roger “Bud” Chamberlin isn’t sure whether his Ole Forest Inn near Curtis is a proper supper club.

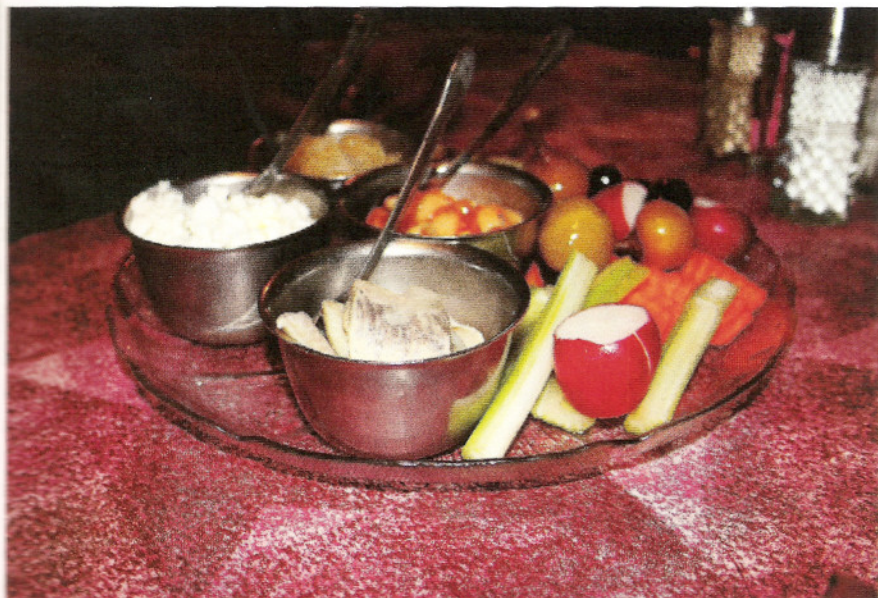
It’s located on a lake (Big Manistique) and the specialty is dinner food like prime rib, planked whitefish and perch.

Within the restaurant building there’s also an inn that operates as a bed and breakfast.

Back to Wisconsin, there’s a rib joint by the railroad tracks in Superior’s Itasca neighborhood that many still think of as Eddie’s Supper Club.

“New” owner Dina Conner (she’s owned it for 14 years) changed the name to Eddie’s World Famous Ribs, but doesn’t care what people call it as long as they keep coming back for the comfortable, homey atmosphere and tradition of scratch cooking. “I get calls all the time, that’s what people come here for,” she says.

The atmosphere is more casual than it was in the dressed-up, big-night-out ’60s, and the menu’s more flexible, too. You’re not locked into a fixed-price menu like in the old school days. Besides the usual pasta



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The relish tray, an icon of old-style supper clubs, remains a mainstay at Dreamland Supper Club in rural Superior, where co-owner and chef Terri Patterson, top, and her staff create them from scratch daily. That attention to detail and freshness also applies to the menu.



TERRI PATTERSON / DREAMLAND SUPPER CLUB

Supper-club fans love the hearty comfort food. At right, owner Dina Conner from Eddie's World Famous Ribs in Superior, displays the restaurant's popular barbecue ribs. The fish plate, top, is served often at Dreamland Supper Club outside of Superior.



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and sandwich dishes, Eddie's features breaded pork chops (\$12.95), liver and onions (\$8.95) and its specialty, ribs by the full rack (\$18.95), half rack (\$15.95) and quarter rack (\$12.95), with your choice of standard or spicy seasonings and a secret preparation method that dates back more than 50 years.

And if it's a Friday, stop in for the all-you-can-eat cod fish fry (\$8.95). "All of our breaded items are hand-breaded in-house," Dina says, "the shrimp, the scallops, pork chops, everything."

Just south of Iron River, Wisconsin, Pam Jungst and her husband, Kevin, have owned and run The Spot Supper Club and Resort for 12 years. Before that, Pam didn't know what a supper club was. "We're from Iowa and we'd never heard of it 'til we moved up here."

Although Up Northerners get it, others don't, she says. "We get some people who say, 'Can we eat here or do we have to join the club or something?'"

"Supper clubs to me and most of my patrons mean a place where you go for a nice meal. Not fancy, but a nice dinner and a nice place to go if you were going to celebrate a

birthday or an anniversary."

From its location on the Pike Lake Chain of lakes and its million-dollar view of Buskey Bay to its lobster, fresh fish and hand-cut, char-grilled steaks, The Spot has the concept of supper club nailed. Scratch-made soups, cheesecakes and dressings and muddled old-fashioned, martinis and Manhattans drive it home.

Even though the Lawn Beach Inn in Lake Nebagamon, Wisconsin, has dropped "supper club" from its name, it still has that old-school flavor, says Carol Mallegni, whose parents bought the place in 1967.

"We have a waitress, Jeanne Coletta, who has worked here for 40 years," Carol says. Her brother, Bill Urbaniak, owns the Lawn Beach Inn now. Specialties include jambalaya, shrimp scampi, salade Nicoise and steak Oscar.

"If you don't know what steak Oscar is, it's a steak served with hollandaise sauce, crabmeat and asparagus on top, kind of a step back to the 1950s," Carol says. "I cook all that to order. Everything's individually prepared."

The food's important, but so is the feeling. Even though it's open to the public, "We have regulars who call it the club," she says. They reserve the same table, come on the same night and call to check up on those they don't see every week.

The building was built in 1896 as housing for Weyerhaeuser lumber company supervisors. Rooms used to be for rent but are no longer, she says.

Lawn Beach Inn is so old-school, it's as if credit cards hadn't been invented yet ... because it doesn't take them. But they take cash and checks from anywhere.

There's a clubby feel at Birch Terrace Supper Club in Grand Marais, Minnesota. The restaurant is housed in the former mansion of an 1890s lumber baron.

"It's a cool old building," says manager Dave Larsen, who co-owns the restaurant with his brothers Brian and Donny. "There are three or four smaller dining areas you can choose to break off from the group."



COURTESY BRADLEY BEAUDETTE / DREAMLAND RESTAURANT & BAR

Patrons enjoy a relaxing atmosphere at Dreamland Restaurant & Bar near Lake Linden in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, where Friday's fish fry has been a big draw since about 1950.

It also carries the supper club tradition of made-from-scratch comfort food, "mostly meat and potatoes," he says, including steaks, barbecue ribs and fresh lake trout. The lounge crowd's demographic

ranges from early 20s to 60s, while the dinner diners are 40s up to 80s. They're throwing down \$14 for pasta dishes, \$20-something for steak and seafood entrees and \$47 for 2-pound king crab.

Restaurant & Lodging

For Sharon Scheulke, co-owner of Skylawn Supper Club in Hurley, Wisconsin, "supper club" means an upscale feel, great steaks and seafood, and extras like soup, salad and a warm loaf of bread with each dinner. Maybe even an old throwback entree like liver and onions (\$12.99).

Although the original building burned and was rebuilt, a supper club has been here for years and years, she says.

Besides steaks and seafood, Skylawn's made-from-scratch soups are popular, Sharon adds. "We're well-known for our Hungarian mushroom soup."



Food and feature writer Tom Wilkowske of Duluth would have felt comfortable reviewing a prehistoric supper club.

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