

BUSINESS



BELLY UP FOR BACON

Jethro's newest restaurant opens in West Des Moines



MARY WILLIE/REGISTER PHOTOS Jethro's BBQ 'n Bacon Bacon is open for business in West Des Moines. Owner Bruce Gerleman holds a double Bacon Bacon Steak Sandwich, made with Jethro's own dry-aged, slow-smoked bacon steak on a toasted hoagie with Hollandaise sauce.

JETHRO'S BBQ 'N BACON BACON

By Patt Johnson | pjohnson@dmreg.com

WHAT: The latest Jethro's restaurant, bacon-themed, opens at 7 a.m. today.

WHERE: 1480 22nd St., West Des Moines (formerly Hooters)

HOURS: Kitchen is open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

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MORE ONLINE

See more photos and a video from Jethro's BBQ 'n Bacon Bacon restaurant at DesMoinesRegister.com.

The much anticipated Jethro's BBQ 'n Bacon Bacon restaurant in West Des Moines opens at 7 a.m. today with a menu that is chock full of, well, bacon.

There are bacon entrees for breakfast, lunch and dinner. There are bacon appetizers and bacon side dishes. And, of course, there's bacon for dessert.

The new restaurant, which is in the spot formerly occupied by Hooters, is the sixth Jethro's eatery for owner Bruce Gerleman, who also owns Splash Seafood Bar & Grill in downtown Des Moines.

"No one in the state that I know of is doing this," Gerleman said of his bacon-themed restaurant.

Bacon Bacon will serve a traditional Jethro's barbecue menu, along with bacon specialties like:

» A fried hickory smoked bacon appetizer (\$8.95).

» A triple bacon burger entree — that's a bacon and beef burger topped with three slices of Canadian bacon and three strips of crispy bacon (\$13.95).

» Bacon ice cream sandwiched between two sweet corn cookies (\$4).

"Our main attraction is still barbecue, including ribs and wings," Gerleman said.

He created the Bacon Bacon menu with executive chef Cominic Iannarelli. It includes a hand-carved, thick-cut bacon steak (\$10.95).

The bacon theme has drawn attention from across the state, Gerleman said. Des Moines, he declared, is the center of the bacon universe and Jethro's, as a chain, is the largest independent buyer of pork in the state.

"To have a pork chop-themed restaurant and now a bacon restaurant speaks to the quality of pork Iowa raises," said Ron Kirkenholz, spokesman for the Iowa Pork Producers Association. He predicted a continued strong market for bacon based on the popularity of the fatty meat and the increasing number of bacon festivals popping up.

"You can get bacon on or in just about anything," he said.

Jethro's Bacon Bacon will serve breakfast all day, every day, Gerleman said. The breakfast menu is naturally bacon-centric and includes a triple bacon omelet (\$12.95), triple bacon tator tot skillet (\$12.95) and something they call the Elvis Presley, a stack of three bacon and banana buttermilk pan-cakes topped with peanut butter sauce (\$11.95).

An arcade-like machine called the Squeezerator takes whole fresh oranges and makes juice, which customers can watch. There's also a retail counter where customers can buy cherry wood smoked, hickory and peppercorn flavored thick- and thin-sliced bacon to take home.

The restaurant has 25 big-screen televisions for sports viewing, keeping with Jethro's neighborhood sports bar tag-line.

Gerleman remodeled the old Hooters bar and restaurant and added about 600 square feet to the original 5,000-square-foot building for a walk-in cooler and freezers. The restaurant seats about 180 people and serves a full bar, including premium bourbon and 12 craft beers.

Gerleman said he had long thought about a bacon-themed restaurant but could not find the right location. The West Des Moines spot was perfect because of its high visibility, easy access to Interstate Highway 235 and central location, he said.

The first Jethro's opened on Forest Avenue near Drake University in 2008. From there restaurants were added in Altoona, Waukee, Ankeny and Johnston. For now Gerleman said he's concentrating on those restaurants with no immediate plans for more Jethro's locations.



The menu is chock-full of bacon, but owner Bruce Gerleman says the main attraction is still barbecue.



Jethro's bacon-wrapped Rib Tasters are served with a bourbon glaze.