

## STONE POINT GRILL: BRINGING A TASTE OF MINNESOTA TO MOKENA

### **Heather Warthen**

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As children, cousins Jim Burke of Orland Park and Brad Banaszak, a former Orland Park resident, often spent their summers fishing and enjoying the outdoors around Cass Lake in Minnesota. However, the food from those trips up north made a lasting impact on the two cousins, prompting them to share it with the southwest suburbs of Chicago.

Stoney Point Grill, which opened about two years ago, is located at 19031 Old LaGrange Road in Mokena. Since its opening, the restaurant and off-track betting (OTB) establishment has offered guests a contemporary taste of the northern Midwestern cuisine that Burke and Banaszak have loved since they were children.

“A lot of the items on the menu relate to that region in Minnesota,” explained general manager Mark Lavender. “They wanted to bring Minnesota down here.”

According to Lavender, the grill prepares everything home made, down to the dressings and sauces.

“Everything we do, we take extreme care in,” he explained.

The ribs and filet are Lavender’s choices for entrees.

“I’m a meat man—the filet is so tender and it’s served with this great homemade steak butter,” he added.

A menu featuring staples, as well as unique twists on classic favorites is also important, according to Lavender.

“We try to do things where you can’t get the same flavors anywhere else. We want to make it a unique menu,” said Lavender.

Mokena Messenger Editor Colleen Sheehan and sales director Virginia Voyles, along with myself, dined at the grill for lunch a couple weeks ago.

Hardwood floors and rich burgundy and forest green set the tone for a relaxed meal, as well as flatscreen televisions broadcasting horse races and athletic events added to the care free atmosphere.

Don’t let the laidback, relaxing ambiance fool you—we were in for a pleasant surprise as we started our lunch sampling the grill’s panzanella (\$7.95), Lake Perch fingers (\$9.95) and buffalo shrimp (\$8.95).

Panzanella is Stoney Point’s take on bruschetta, according to Lavender. This is definitely a sweeter form that arrives with cucumbers, watercress and red onions in addition to the traditional tomatoes drizzled with a balsamic chipotle vinaigrette. It quickly became a table favorite.

Lake Perch fingers, served with a spicy (not too spicy for this writer) remoulade, are lightly breaded, melting in your mouth—and a must for fish fanatics.

With options of spicy buffalo, spicy garlic or Stoney ranch, the buffalo shrimp are tender Gulf shrimp bathed in the sauce of choice—Stoney ranch was our option, the sauce giving just enough of a kick to these generous shrimp.

Stoney Point Wedge salad (\$7.95) is perfect for two to share—an entire wedge of Iceberg features a mild, creamy homemade blue cheese dressing coating it, with tomato, bleu cheese crumbles, applewood smoked bacon and red onion garnishing the greens.

The burgers here—most half-pound Black Angus beef—are well done, as we sampled the Stoney Burger (arrives topped with American cheese for \$6.95).

Sandwiches (served with side of choice which varies from their original crinkle cut fries, house garlic mashed potatoes or sautéed spinach, among others) are also popular at the grill.

The Walleye poor boy (\$9.95) is a unique twist on a poor boy— with the favorable fish layered with applewood smoked bacon, lettuce, tomato and tartar sauce. The shaved prime rib sandwich (\$9.95) featured delicate slow-roasted slices of meat topped with mozzarella cheese and red peppers that were marinated in balsamic vinegar. Dip the sandwich in the grill’s horseradish sauce that arrives with it for a savory bite.

The filet (\$24.95) here is a 10-ounce seasoned and seared cut, served on a hotplate with garlic butter that provides both an aroma and taste that is not to be quickly forgotten.

Stoney Bones (\$16.95) feature delicious hickory smoked pork that literally fell off the bone. Rib lovers will be pleased.

**Desserts are aplenty, but the one that tops the list is the home made bread pudding (\$5.95). A divinely sweet combination of Kahlua, brown sugar and chocolate chips smothering the French baguettes and served with the warm caramel sauce, this dessert is a sinfully sweet way to finish the meal.**

**All bets are off—this is one place to definitely add to your list of restaurants to try.**

**The grill does host private events such as showers, meet ings and parties.**

**On Friday, Nov. 2, the grill is hosting their Halloween party beginning at 9 a.m. with a cos tume contest scheduled.**

**Stoney Point Grill is open seven days a week from 11 to 1 a.m.**

**For more information, call (708) 479-9700 or visit [www.stoneypointgrill.com](http://www.stoneypointgrill.com).**