

Stagecoach Inn tends to liven up as sun goes down

By Beth Webb
Special to The Gazette



Jennifer Spangler photo

While it often looks deserted during the daytime, the Stagecoach Inn just outside Fort Atkinson tends to liven up in the evening. As The Gazette's restaurant review team, The Four Dishes, found out, the place is hopping even on Tuesdays.

STAGECOACH INN

Address: 11946 N. Highway 26, Fort Atkinson. Phone: 608-868-3850 Website: [Facebook.com/DinnerAtStagecoach](https://www.facebook.com/DinnerAtStagecoach)
Hours: 4:30-9:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 4:15-10:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 3:30-9:30 p.m. Sunday. Reservations: For parties of five or more Credit cards: Yes Wheelchair access: Yes Vegetarian items: No Vegan items: No Gluten-free items: Yes Menu: Stagecoach Inn offers a traditional supper club menu of steaks, chops and seafood. There are nightly specials including ribeye steak, boneless pork chops and breaded pork tenderloin (\$14.95 ea.) on Tuesdays, queen-cut prime rib

Ratings

Food: 

Service: 

Cost: \$12.95-\$33.95

Value: 

- 5 plates—Outstanding
- 4 plates—Above average
- 3 plates—Average
- 2 plates—Below average
- 1 plate—Poor

(\$15.95) on Wednesdays, steak and shrimp (\$14.95) on Thursdays and Sundays, and of course, Friday night fish fry of deep-fried cod (\$12.95), broiled cod or lake perch (\$13.45 ea). Saturday’s special is king-cut prime rib (\$20.95) or queen-cut with deep-fried shrimp (\$23.95).



FOUR DISHES

FORT ATKINSON

Whenever I pass the Stagecoach Inn on Highway 26, it always looks abandoned. I have to ask myself, is this place closed or what?

I’m happy to report it comes alive at 4:30 every night but Monday, and it becomes packed with regulars and hungry passers-by.

There is a kind of nostalgic aura to the Stagecoach Inn. A traditional-style supper club that has been open for more than half a century, it is unassuming from the outside and warm and affable on the inside.

Supper clubs are really like “social clubs,” where regulars get together for a congenial drink and a nice meal. They remain a vital part of the Wisconsin dining scene, but I have to admit, I’m not a supper club fan. I like trying new, creative menus, and I’m not much of a meat eater. I’m in the minority, though, because people rave about Stagecoach Inn. And it was packed even on a weeknight.

As you enter, the low ceilings and carpeting make it feel as if you’re walking into someone’s home. There is a large bar with a small seating area and a cozy dining room with about a dozen tables. The interior walls look similar to those of a log cabin from the inside, and there are several prints of Western decor from days gone by that make you instantly feel as if you’re in the north woods. Artificial greens and white Christmas lights line the walls and doorways to add to the homey feel.

The Stagecoach was filled with diners at 6 p.m. on a Tuesday, so after checking in with the hostess, we ambled up to a couple of open seats at the bar. I started with an outstanding brandy Old Fashioned sour with olives. Jennifer went with her staple—an Absolut vodka and tonic with extra lime—and Helene had an excellent 7 and 7.

While we were waiting for a table, we watched the bartender mix up quite a few Grasshoppers with mint ice cream—so we knew what dessert was going to be.

Our wait didn’t seem that long as our bar mates were friendly and engaging. A server presented us with menus in advance and asked us to look them over, saying she would be back to take our orders. When we were seated, there was a relish tray already waiting at our table.

The four-tiered tray was pleasing to the eye, with creamy beets on top followed by pea salad, a marinated

three-bean salad and corn relish—each on its own level. Dinners include soup or juice, choice of potato (baked, au gratin or french fries) and a salad. The dinner salads and soups came out quickly, and I liked the fact Stagecoach offers rye rolls rather than traditional plain white rolls.

For my meal, I selected the shrimp in garlic butter (\$17.95). It came with a baked potato, and I ate every bite.

Jennifer ordered the queen-cut filet mignon (\$21.95). For her side, she chose a French onion soup that had a rich broth, plenty of onions and was topped with croutons. The salad was simple, consisting of iceberg lettuce and just a tad of red cabbage. Jennifer selected the house vinaigrette dressing, which was pretty basic.

Her steak, ordered medium, was a bit overcooked and crusty on the outer edges. It wasn't until she got to the center that she noticed the pinkness she'd been hoping for. This was the part that tasted the best—moist and flavorful.

Nikki also opted for steak by ordering one of the Tuesday evening specials, the 10-ounce ribeye dinner (\$14.95) with salad and french fries. The meat was cut on the thin side and had a generous marbling of fat, but it came medium-rare as requested and had nice flavor. She added a side of broiled scallops (\$8.95 for 4), served with drawn butter, which was a sweet addition to the meal.

Fried perch (\$13.48) was Helene's choice, and it came breaded with tartar sauce and a side of coleslaw. The fish was tasty and not at all oily, and it had a nice crunch to it.

Dessert of course was a round of Grasshoppers and brandy Alexanders. The brandy Alexander was slightly stronger than the Grasshopper and not as sweet, but both were definitely worth ordering. Both proved a proper end to our supper club experience.

The Four Dishes—Nikki Bolka, Helene Ramsdell, Jennifer Spangler and Beth Webb—review regional restaurants for The Gazette.