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Posted: Thursday, September 7, 2017 9:17 am | Updated: 7:38 am, Tue Sep 12, 2017.

MILTON — The Buckhorn Supper Club on the southern shore of Lake Koshkonong is a top-10 finalist in the Travel Wisconsin Supper Club Showdown.

Located at 11802 N. Charley Bluff Road, the Buckhorn came in seventh place, receiving 6,164 votes, in the online contest that encouraged residents and out-of-state visitors to vote for their favorite supper club in Wisconsin.

The Elias Inn Supper Club in Watertown placed 18th.

## FAVORITE SPOT

FAVORITE SPOT — State Department of Administration Secretary Scott Neitzel last week Thursday recognized Buckhorn Supper Club on Lake Koshkonong as a winner in the Travel Wisconsin Supper Club Showdown. Neitzel, left, is pictured with owners Dawn and Chico Pope; their daughter, Shelley Huhnke, who is the bar and restaurant manager, and their son, Kevin Pope, who is the restaurant chef. — Tammy Anderson photo.

State Department of Administration Secretary Scott Neitzel presented an honorary plaque to the Pope family, owners of Buckhorn, last week Thursday.

Family members include owners Dawn and Chico Pope; their daughter, Shelley Huhnke, who is the bar and restaurant manager; and their son, Kevin Pope, who is the restaurant chef.

The Buckhorn has been serving guests for more than 85 years. The Pope family has been the supper club's owner since 1997.

Gov. Scott Walker designated Thursday, Aug. 31, as Supper Club Day throughout Wisconsin to honor the state's supper clubs.

"Supper clubs are an iconic part of Wisconsin, and one that has played an important role in our state's tourism economy for more than 100 years," Walker said. "Food and beverage spending in Wisconsin continues to rise thanks in part to the hard work and dedication of supper clubs and all restaurants throughout the state, many of which are locally owned and operated. Their hospitality is just one of the reasons why visitors come back to

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Wisconsin year after year.”

Walker joined Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett and cabinet leadership in presenting honorary plaques to several of the top 10 winners of the Travel Wisconsin Supper Club Showdown.

Walker and Klett kicked off Supper Club Day with a lunch visit and plaque presentation at Lehman’s Supper Club & Cocktail Lounge in Rice Lake, followed by a stop at first-place award-winner Ishnala Supper Club in Lake Delton, and dinner at Pinewood Supper Club in Mosinee.

“We know from our research that food is a big driver of tourism,” said Klett. “When travelers visit a destination, they want an authentic experience, and food is a big

part of that. Wisconsin is home to more than 250 supper clubs that not only provide an authentic dining experience, they’ve shared it with residents and visitors for generations.”

The contest brought in nearly 400,000 votes.

Back to the Buckhorn

So, why do people keep coming back to the Buckhorn Supper Club?

U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Milton, enjoys the prime rib and a side of shrimp. Shelley points out he even mentioned it in his book.

The Buckhorn serves prime rib every night the restaurant is open. Chico said customers appreciate the restaurant being family-owned and operated.

“They notice the extra steps and effort we put in to make sure they have a pleasant experience with us,” he said.

Surely, an advantage is being on the lake, he said.

“The lake area traffic continues to increase and we certainly benefit from that,” he said.

Chico, the 2016 chairman of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, pointed to a movement back to dining at traditional supper clubs.

Milwaukee filmmaker and author Ron Faiola introduced “Wisconsin Supper Clubs: an Old-Fashioned Experience” as a film in 2011 and book in 2013. Others followed with books and then films that included the 2015 documentary, “Old Fashioned: The Story of the Wisconsin Supper Club.”

In 2016, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism it launched its supper club-themed marketing campaign. The commercial was filmed at the Buckhorn. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation said that the campaign commercial is the most successful in Travel Wisconsin history, having reached 1.4 million views.

Travel Wisconsin finalists

The following is the placing of supper clubs in the Travel Wisconsin Supper Club:

1. Ishnala Supper Club, Wisconsin Dells.
2. Pinewood Supper Club, Mosinee.
3. Lehman’s Supper Club & Cocktail Lounge, Rice Lake.
4. Chissy’s Pub & Grille, Waldo.
5. Schwarz’s Supper Club, New Holstein.
6. HobNob Restaurant, Racine.
7. Buckhorn Supper Club, Milton.



- 8. McGregor's Blink Bonnie Supper Club, Germain.
- 9. The 5 O'Clock Club, Cumberland.
- 10. Donny's Glidden Lodge, Sturgeon Bay.
- 11. Norwood Pines Supper Club, Minocqua.
- 12. The Roxy Supper Club, Oshkosh.
- 13. Silvercryst Supper Club/Motel, Wautoma.
- 14. Bob & Geri's Black Otter Supper Club, Hortonville.
- 15. Stones Throw Supper Club, Merrilan.
- 16. Maiden Lakes Supper Club, Mountain.
- 17. Sky Club, Plover.
- 18. Elias Inn Supper Club, Watertown.
- 19. Cimaroli's Supper Club, Portage.
- 20. Dirty Oar Supper Club, Nekoosa.

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