

MODERN LUXURY

DMK BURGER & FISH

FOOD & DRINK



BEEFING UP

DMK BURGER & FISH BRINGS A SAMPLING OF ITS BEST CHICAGO OFFERINGS TO EVANSTON.

By Michael Wren | Photography by Jason Little

Fellow Evanstonians Michael Kornick and David Morton, owners of the new DMK Burger & Fish in Evanston, know how to build restaurants with widespread appeal—informal but creatively conceived spots that dress up simple pleasures with the right mix of high-end ingredients and homespun accoutrements.

Bite into one of their burgers, and you'll understand the advantages of working with hormone-free, grass-fed beef, which positively drips with a rich and nutty Midwestern piquancy. DMK's sides run the gamut from simple tater tots to Parmesan-dusted fries served with a truffle cream sauce. And then there's the house chocolate shake, one of the best shakes on the North Shore.

Chef Kornick has no qualms about using a syrup—reminiscent of the classic flavor of Hershey's Syrup—for his chocolate flavoring. Add a little Petersen's ice cream (from Oak Park), the right amount of milk, a good

blender, and you've got a shake so creamy it defies gravity on an upside-down spoon.

By this time, repurposing simple pleasures is old hat for DMK's owners. Kornick did it—and continues to do it—with his eternally youthful MK in River North, which championed the idea that you could serve sophisticated New American cuisine in a congenial, unpretentious atmosphere.

Morton, son of steakhouse scion Arnie Morton, built (but is no longer involved with) the quick-service Italian Pompei empire by carefully repackaging Taylor Street red sauce staples—like pasta, pizza and parmigiana—for takeout and quick-order convenience.

When the duo decided to team up, they opened with DMK Burger Bar in Lakeview, showcasing richly flavored and well-appointed grass-fed burgers. It was so successful that they built Fish Bar, a New England-inspired fish shack, next door.

FAMILY STYLE

Grab one of the 26 seats at the new DMK Burger & Fish's communal tables, and make new friends while enjoying a best-of-the-best list at this Chicago outpost in Evanston.

DMK Burger & Fish

815 Noyes St., Evanston
847.424.8225
dmkrestaurants.com

Sun., Tue., Wed., Thu.:
11:00AM-10PM
Fri.-Sat.: 11AM-midnight

Burgers: \$9; seafood sandwiches:
\$9-\$12; salads: \$9-\$15; drinks
and milkshakes: \$3-\$5

CONTINUED...





COMFORT FOOD

Clockwise from top: Add a fried egg to any burger, like the No. 4 with roasted hatch green chile; signature house Parmesan-dusted french fries served with a side of truffle cream; fried shrimp and crawfish po'boy on a well-buttered lobster roll bun.



The menu in Evanston is a best-of-the-best list of DMK's most popular burgers, fries and fish sandwiches from Chicago, plus the addition of a small wings section—barbecue or buffalo—borrowed from their County Barbeque on Taylor Street.

I like the size of DMK's 5-ounce burgers, which are formed from a rich mix of brisket and chuck. The patties aren't big enough to overwhelm their additions, especially in the house's No. 1 burger, topped with balsamic-glazed red onions, aged sharp cheddar, smoked bacon and barbecue sauce. Everything combines to create a kind of Worcestershire-like steak sauce, which soaks into but doesn't break down DMK's great potato-based buns.

The house's seafood isn't local, but it's all certified sustainable, based on a partnership with the Shedd Aquarium. It's a loss that Kornick hasn't been able to bring his *a la plancha* seafood offerings up north, but there are welcome nods to New

England, including a big, meaty crabcake sandwich glazed with Old Bay-spiked mayo as well as a fried shrimp and crawfish po'boy served on a well-buttered lobster roll bun.

The biggest surprise may be the excellent soft-drink list—exclusive to Evanston—which offers bottles of small-batch soda pop from the South and East, including a spicy Ale 8 ginger ale from Kentucky and a Cheerwine black cherry soda from North Carolina that has a nice bite of cranberry tartness on the finish. These selections were chosen by DMK's beverage director, Michael Rubel, who is said to have curated it with the same care he'd use to build a wine list. It shows.

Like pretty much everything Kornick and Morton put their names on, DMK Burger & Fish does a good job of alleviating some of the guilt involved with wolfing down what are, in essence, high-class greasy spoon classics. It's more proof that a spoonfull of originality helps the high-calorie goodness go down. ■

What to Eat

No. 1 burger: aged cheddar, smoked bacon, charred balsamic red onions, Rufus Teague's barbecue sauce (\$9); Crabby Patty: Old Bay mayo, lettuce, tomato, onion (\$11); Satchmo: shrimp and crawfish, roasted garlic aioli, b&b pickles, (\$12); chocolate shake (\$5); Cheerwine Black Cherry Soda (\$3)

Rubbing Elbows

DMK Burger & Fish doesn't offer a spacious dining room. There are a total of 26 seats in the small room, most of which are nestled under communal tables. If you don't want to share a table with strangers, consider ordering for pickup.

Fancy Fries

DMK's french-fry preparations range from Wisconsin cheddar and scallions to sweet-potato fries with lemon-Tabasco aioli, all of which can be spiced up with a shot of the house's chipotle ketchup. But the best—most decadent—bet is a Parmesan-dusted option with a side of truffle cream.

