

BY TAI ALEXANDER

# Fire up the grill

It's summer and that means grilling season in the Great Lake State. With an increased interest in al fresco dining, there are a handful of restaurants opening up their outdoor spaces to accommodate the flavors and savors of the grill.

## The Grill House

Taking a different twist, you actually become the grillmaster at The Grill House in Allegan, an 1836 former farmhouse that offers one of the most unique and flavorful dining opportunities in the state.

Upon arrival, guests select their favorite meat — choosing from six different cuts of steak, shrimp, tuna, chicken or kabobs — before heading to the 30-person indoor grill for a fired-up, hands-on experience like no other. Sides such as house salad, potatoes, sautéed onions, signature baked beans and Texas toast round out the meal.

The Grill House features an indoor dining room, lower-level bar called The Rock and outdoor courtyard, offering a variety of choices for a romantic dinner, family gathering or group outing. The Silo, a new structure built on the site of the farm's former barn, is now one of the area's most popular banquet and wedding spaces.

Located in the former Hubbard House, a boarding home for area lumberjacks, the farmhouse was the area's first local public lodging and watering hole. Legend has it that in 1847, a bar-room knife fight led to the death of one of the saw-mill workers and his body was buried on the property in an unmarked grave. Don't be surprised if Jack, the spirit of that

man, makes his presence known to you during your visit. He's known to move chairs, dim the lights, open or close doors, and on rare occasions, a single shot of whiskey — Jack's drink of choice — mysteriously appears on the lower level bar. (grillhouse.net; 269-686-9192).

## Schuler's Restaurant & Pub

As one of Michigan's longest-running, family-owned and operated businesses, Schuler's Restaurant & Pub in downtown Marshall is always looking for ways to keep things fresh and exciting — like adding a grill to the outdoor patio, where weekly specials are served Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The 700-square-foot patio outside of Winston's Pub features a generous grilling space, along with 34 seats for guests, stretching out along Eagle Street. From late spring through early fall, weather permitting, Executive Sous Chef Tim "TG" Gibbs



Grilling is the main attraction at restaurants like Schuler's, top and above, and The Grill House, left.





The sister property to the Bridge Street Tap Room next door, the brewery is one of nearly 250 that operate around the state, supporting Michigan's claim as The Great Beer State.



VIRGINIATILE

virginiatile.com

GRAND RAPIDS

DETROIT

CHICAGO

CLEVELAND



Product Shown: New Ravenna Calla

serves up mouth-watering items such as barbecue pork cutlet with sweet potatoes and corn on the cob, baby back ribs with baked beans and sweet corn, and barbecue chicken with roasted potatoes and asparagus.

"Our grill nights have become very popular with both our regulars and our new visitors," says third-generation owner Hans Schuler. "Over the past few years, we've made improvements to the patio itself, as well as increasing the frequency with which we fire up the grill to accommodate increased requests from our guests." (schulersrestaurant.com; 269-781-0600)

### Lake Charlevoix Brewing Co.

Celebrating its one-year anniversary June 1, Lake Charlevoix Brewing in downtown Charlevoix offers up a unique blend of craft beer and grilled pub fare on its patio overlooking Round Lake, just south of the town's famous lift bridge. The sister property to the Bridge Street Tap Room next door, the brewery is one of nearly 250 that operate around the state, supporting Michigan's claim as The Great Beer State.

With a dedication to local, both the brewery and taproom look to Michigan-based producers for both the food and beverages on their menus. On the patio, you'll find Michigan angus burgers, hot dogs and brats from nearby Plaths, barbecue chicken and skewered veggies, paired with the likes of Up North Pale Ale, Michigan Beach Blonde or Pine River Porter — year-round brews on the eight-tap system.

If the food, beer and views aren't enough, LCBC (as it is called by the locals) also offers live entertainment on the deck on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays throughout the summer and into the early fall season. (lakecharlevoixbrewing.com; 231-437-3220). ≈

*Tai Alexander is an avid traveler and foodie based in northwest Michigan who has been sharing news and stories since 1987.*