

# RESTAURANT SCENE: Valpo Eatery Celebrates Food, Industry

**BY ELOISE MARIE VALADEZ**

Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille in Valparaiso combines interesting decor and flavorful recipes all in one location. The restaurant opened its doors in May 2010.

"Our slogan is saluting American greatness," said owner Mike Leeson, adding that creativity and innovation are celebrated at the restaurant.

Whether it's through videos and clips shown on the multitude of screens; photographs and art work displayed on the walls or through menu items, creativity is in the forefront.

"We also try to give people an educational experience as well as being in a unique environment," Leeson said.

Every week Leeson also features a special item on the menu called their "weekly salute," which honors a historic person.

He said the entire concept behind his eatery is to pay tribute to American ingenuity, heroes, and other people from the past and present.

During a recent Saturday afternoon visit to Industrial Revolution, we were immediately captured by all there was to see. We were seated in a spacious booth in front of a photograph depicting the restaurant's theme.

The photograph titled "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" features 11 ironworkers eating lunch on a beam during the construction of Rockefeller Center in New York. It was taken in 1932 and is quite dramatic as the men have no safety cables.

Leeson, who has worked in the steel industry since high school, also owns Synergy Steel Structures in Lansing. He said he was taken by the photograph as well as a sculpture of the men created by Sergio Furnari.

Furnari was also fascinated by the photo and set out to sculpt the 11 ironworkers in 1999. He was almost finished in 2001 when 9/11 happened.

So when he completed the sculpture he brought it to the Twin Towers site for display during the cleanup after the tragedy.

"He wanted to give the workers something to smile about," Leeson said.

The sculpture then went on tour around the country. Leeson said he sought out Furnari to talk with him about buying the piece. And the rest is history -- The original work now sits on top of Industrial Revolution.

Leeson, who designed and decorated the restaurant, calls his food "vintage comfort food."

There's nothing frozen, he said, adding "everything is custom-made and handcrafted."

Our lunch choices while there were the Reuben sandwich, which was the weekly special. Titled the John Hancock, the sandwich was flavorful and packed with corned beef. We also tried the Crooked Chicken Mac and Cheese.

The mac and cheese got a thumbs up for its thick slices of chicken and a flavorful mix of Parmesan and Swiss cheese as well as its blend of peas, bacon and white wine.

Among other selections on the menu are various brick-oven pizzas including The Revolution, with pepperoni, sausage, bacon, tomato sauce and cheese (\$8.50) and the Chicago meatball (\$9). Also starring are Baja Perch Tacos (\$16); Steelworker Ribeye (\$25); Mom's Double Shift Pot Roast (\$14) and Legendary Meatloaf (\$12), among many other items.

## **If you go**

**WHAT:** Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille

**WHERE:** 1084 Linwood Ave., Valparaiso

(actually right along U.S. 30)

**HOURS:** 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sun. through Thurs.

11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fri. and Sat.

**FYI:** (219) 465-1801



The photograph "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" hangs in Valparaiso's Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille.



The sculpture "Lunchtime on Top of a Skyscraper" sits atop Industrial Revolution Eatery & Grille in Valparaiso.