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Champion Chicken feeds hungry nor'westerners

By Bobby Tanzilo

Have you seen the chicken? No, not the rhythm chicken. I'm talking about that huge bird roosting atop a white van decorated with the Champion Chicken logo?

We spotted it almost daily after moving to our new neighborhood and although tempted to follow it, we didn't. But soon enough, we found its coop at 8718 W. Lisbon Ave.

Champion Chicken, on the northwest side since 1959, is something of a throwback to the days when neighborhood places ruled the roost. The dining room is open late (until midnight every day) and there's a counter, where even on a Saturday, just before closing time, there are regulars chatting up the young staff.

Neighborhood memorabilia adorns the walls of the dining room, with dark wood benches and an assortment of knick-knacks.

But don't come for the decor, come for the good, home-style food. Most times, the dining room is doing a brisk business in, of course, fried chicken, but also in hamburgers, sandwiches and frozen custard.

You haven't seen busy, though, until you've clocked the pickup counter next door on a Friday at dinner time. A window opens up to a large staff running hither and thither preparing hundreds of fish dinners, fried chicken meals and more for the steady stream of customers popping in to pick up a quick meal.

Amazingly enough, even when the rush is on, the counter staff is all smiles and cheer. How do they do it?

The Champion Chicken menu is wide-ranging, like any good family restaurant. There are salads, soups, chili, hot and cold sandwiches, burgers, seafood, fried chicken, ribs, meatloaf, pasta, pizza and Mexican fare. However, it is lacking in any breakfast choices, since the place doesn't open until 11 a.m. This leaves the late-night diner with a yen for an omelet out of luck, though.

The Chicken also delivers and caters, if you can't make it over there.

But make it over there, you should, because only there can you purchase the awesome midnight blue muscle-flexing Champion Chicken t-shirt for \$15! It is, at the moment, the coolest Milwaukee t-shirt around.

The Chicken sometimes hosts events, like a recent car show in the parking lot, too.

Call Champion Chicken at (414) 462-6200 or visit them on the Internet at www.championchicken.net.