



### **Getting a Bellyful of Route 66**

Quirky food, fun facts and good folks along the Main Street of America

If you're searching for a taste of the old Route 66, Springfield can dish up a plateful of historical flavors. From the original hotdog on a stick to the world's first and oldest drive-up window restaurant, Illinois' capital city is alive and kicking with not only the spirit of the Mother Road, but with some of the best fare from its heyday as well. Read on for a brief history of some of Springfield's best-loved foods and the stories behind them.

#### **Cozy Drive In, 2935 South Sixth Street**

As far back as the mid 1940s, customers were gobbling up Ed Waldmire's 15-cent Cozy Dogs. While the price of this delicacy has changed over the years, little else has with this rare gem still found on the Main Street of America. Waldmire created his hot-dog-on-a-stick in 1945 and introduced it at the Illinois State Fair the following year where it "sold like hotcakes." The Cozy Dog is considered by many to be the original fast food. The recipe is simple: Start with an Oscar Mayer™ hot dog, dip in a secret ingredient batter, deep-fry to a golden brown. An inveterate tinkerer, Waldmire also patented a clamping device that held three dogs at a time with a groove on the end that hooked to the side of the fryer.

Over the years the Cozy Drive In became a highway legend, not just for the food, but also for the tales spun by the late Ed Waldmire. The Cozy Drive In, which was inducted into the Route 66 Hall of Fame and named one of *USA Today's* "50 Great Plates in America," lives on through the Waldmire family. You can still get the same batter-dipped dog first served up by Ed Waldmire more than a half-century ago.

#### **The Horseshoe Sandwich**

Ask anybody about the inventor of this cardiac-arrest concoction and you're likely to get two or three different names. Some say Joe Schweska created the first Horseshoe at the Old Leland Hotel in 1928. Others point to Steve Tomko at Wayne's Red Coach Inn as the originator. No matter, from the first bite you'll roll your eyes skyward and thank the heavens for such a creation.

The Horseshoe is made by laying two pieces of toasted bread on a warm platter, then layering meat (the original recipe called for ham) over the toast. Next smother the entire plate with a rich cheese sauce and circle the platter with crispy french fries.

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Since its creation more than 70 years ago, many have duplicated the Horseshoe. While there are endless variations of meat and/or vegetable combinations, ranging from ham to corned beef, from bacon and egg to sautéed vegetables, most agree that the key to a great Horseshoe is the cheese sauce. Some swear by beer, others use wine, still others are loyal to the Welsh rarebit sauce said to have been used in the original 1928 recipe. For a truly original dish, try the Horseshoe at many local restaurants and pubs, including Norb Andy's, Maldaner's, and D'Arcy's Pint. It's Springfield's original comfort food.

The Horseshoe has even captured the attention of Food Channel gurus Burt Wolf, who highlighted it in segments of "Travels and Traditions" and "Local Flavors," and, most recently, Al Roker, in a program titled "On a Roll" that featured unique regional sandwiches.

### **Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop, 118 North Pasfield**

From the moment you step through the door of the Maid-Rite Sandwich Shop, the cozy atmosphere, delicious smells and friendly service will transport you to a simpler time. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Maid-Rite is one of the oldest existing drive-up restaurants in America. The original structure was shaped like a wooden, red and white tugboat. It boasted three counter stools and room for 13 additional customers in small wooden booths. Although the seating area was expanded in 1985 to accommodate the throng of regular customers, the Maid-Rite has maintained the integrity of the original structure.

Maid-Rite's menu is the same as on opening day in 1924, including the steamed loose-meat hamburger with a dab of mustard, pickle relish and onion served on a steamed bun and washed down with a frosty mug of root beer. A favorite with local residents and out-of-towners alike, the Maid-Rite just keeps tugging along.

### **Joe Rogers' Original Recipe Chili Parlor, 820 South Ninth St.**

*Bon Appetit* selected Joe Rogers' Chili as one of the Midwest's great neighborhood restaurants in 2003. So if you're in the mood for chili, you've come to the right place. At Joe Rogers you get your chili just the way you like it: with or without beans; with the right touch of heat, from mild to the firebrand J.R. Special; and with or without grease.

Joe Rogers' secret chili recipe was first introduced to Springfield in 1946 at the Den Chili Parlor. Joe's daughter Marianne carries on the family tradition at the restaurant's current location on old Route 66. It's not unusual to find old friends from out-of-town stopping in for a bowl of nostalgia. And there's always a newcomer testing the J.R. Special in hopes of scrawling a signature on the survivor wall.

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### **Springfield's Chili/Chilli History**

No, it's not misspelled. Many Springfield businesses spell chilli with a double "LL" thanks to the original Dew Chilli Parlor. Legend has it that the Dew's owner, Dew Brockman, quibbled with his sign painter over the spelling and won after noting that the dictionary spelled it both ways. That was in 1909 and by 1968, Springfield was turning out 4 million cans of that spicy beef concoction annually. Chilli Man Chilli and Ray's Chilli, both locally produced, were sold nationally in grocery stores.

In 1993, chilli with two "LL"s became official, when then-state senator Karen Hasara introduced a resolution to the Illinois General Assembly proclaiming Illinois the "Chilli Capital of the Civilized World" and recognizing the spelling with double "LL". The resolution passed unanimously in both houses. Over the years, Springfield has sent many contenders to state, regional and national cook offs.

### **Jungle Jim's Café, 1923 Peoria Road**

Just down the road from Bill Shea's Route 66 Museum you can find a great cup of coffee and some down-home cookin' at Jungle Jim's Cafe. The checkered flags and authentic racing memorabilia help tell the real-life story of proprietor "Jungle" Jim Davison and some of his famous customers.

Jim wanted to be a racecar driver most of his life, but competitors like Buddy Baker and Darrell Waltrip made it difficult to get a start. While Jim didn't make it to the racing big time, he couldn't shake the desire to be around the track so he began selling grilled pork chops in the pits of the local short track with his girlfriend Mary Bloomfield. One thing led to another and he and Mary got married and expanded their portable concession stand to include Springfield's downtown mall, serving the workweek lunch customers. Then things got even better and Jungle Jim's found a permanent site on the city's north side.

Today it's not unusual to find drivers from as far away as the Macon Speedway and Talledega enjoying homemade meatloaf, mashed potatoes and a slab of apple pie. Whether his customers are already famous or just on the road to getting there, or anywhere else for that matter, Jim treats them all the same with a great cup of coffee and a plateful of down-home food. And a chance to watch Barbie® fly across the room on a wire.

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