THE EVOLUTION OF THE DULUTH GRILL

June 1970 - The restaurant opened as Highway Host. In 2010 I met the manager that opened this place. He is alive and well, and had great stories to tell. I am grateful he took the time to share his experience.

How the Duluth Grill was named:
As we have been told in 1991 Highway Host had a manager on maternity leave. While on leave she watched a lot of soap operas. GH was popular then and everyone always met at the fictitious "Port Charles Grill". While still wanting to contribute to her role as manager she called the owners and suggested to give the property a fresh new name; she tossed out the name "Duluth Grill". The owners liked it and the name stuck.

In 2001 the restaurant was closed for business. This is where we stepped in. We re-opened the restaurant with two partners. They owned five Embers Restaurants. At the time Embers was growing and offered to waive start up costs for anyone to open a sixth location. Being quite naive back then I cashed in my 401K and with a hand shake and twelve thousand dollars we opened for business two weeks after signing the lease as "Duluth Grill Embers". Unfortunately the partnership dissolved in less than six months. The good news is we avoided suing each other and as far as I know we're all still alive. I know now the only partner I would have is my wife, children or long term employees who are vested into our business.

2005: When we started with the Embers Company their motto was "One Restaurant Company with 52 Chefs". We never felt the concept progressed so we arranged with them to develop our own menu we could be most proud of. We introduced new items to include vegetarian, gluten free and local products. Made from scratch with family recipes. The biggest draw back to this is it did not really fit the Embers Chain concept.

2008: Three significant things occurred. We were blessed with two new grand children, we became engaged in the Sustainable Twin Ports project and we broke ties with Embers and the restaurant was renamed the "Duluth Grill". Our future became very clear. What we were doing became less important and how we were doing it became more important. Quality of ingredients, serving nutritional whole foods, buying from other family businesses, and diminishing waste drove our decision making choices.

As We Are Today: Our menu is full of delicious choices from basic comfort foods to more contemporary dishes that you will be hopefully exhilarated to find in a neighborhood diner. We strive for quality and believe it begins at our back door. We scrutinize every product in our kitchen and work to bring you the best quality ingredients and good prices too. We continuously work with our suppliers to meet our specifications of quality freshness, simple ingredients, organic, and local products. This year we have began the evolution of the Urban Farm. We now have an expert full time farm manager and we're developing Bio-intensive Farming on a small plot of land, developing our own high quality soil and planning to grow an organic product year round. (Follow us on Facebook to see the farm grow.) Below are many of the things we do:

*** Fair Trade Organic Coffee**
- roasted and supplied locally from Alakef Coffee
*** Swiss Water Decaffeinated Coffee**
*** Fair Trade - Organic Teas**
*** Cage-Free Organic eggs**
*** Organic Salad Greens**
*** Organic whole wheat & white flour**
*** Milk & Cream in returnable bottles & Butter from Dahl's Sunrise Dairy in Babbitt, MN**
*** All Natural Sour Cream**
*** Hot Cocoa made with real milk & organic Dutch cocoa**
*** Lifeway Kefir for kids**
*** White Fish from Lake Superior Fish Company**
*** Smoked Salmon by Eric Goerdt at Northern Waters Smokehaus**
*** Organic Produce from John Fisher Merrit - Food Farms**
*** Organic Produce, Pickles, and Jelly from Kathy Jensen - Talmadge Farms**
*** All Grass Fed Beef Burgers from Mark Thell - 4 Quarters Holdings**
*** Bison from Quarter Master Buffalo in Esko**
*** Gerber Amish Chicken -Cage Free, no chlorine wash, all vegetarian feed, antibiotic free**
*** Wild Alaskan Salmon supplied by the Rogotzke Family**
*** Pure Maple Syrup harvested locally and supplied by the Rogotzke Family**
*** Honey from Ike Strohmayer - Mirror Lake Beeworks**
*** Homemade Rhubarb Sorbet with organic Sugar**
*** Homemade Jams by Jan Johnson w/ wild berries - The Gunflint Trail**
*** Tomatoes from Bay Produce in Superior, WI**
*** Wild Rice from Northern Minnesota**
*** Nitrate free all natural turkey breast**
*** Homemade Caramel Sauce, Hot Fudge, Peanut Butter, Ketchup, Mustard and BBQ Sauce**
*** Homemade Vinaigrettes made simply with olive oil**
*** All Natural Lemonade made from lemons, water & sugar**
*** Our artwork has been purchased from local artists**
*** Our coffee mugs are locally made by Karin Kraemer at Duluth Pottery**
*** Our fryer oil is picked up by Arnie Vanio to run his Veg Car - An oil modified diesel Mercedes**
*** We offer health coverage to all employees working 16 hours a week minimum**