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Taking a Dive

The Dive Bar & Grill – bar food with a twist.

With just 35 minutes for lunch on my own, I zip into **The Dive Bar & Grill**, Mike West & MW Kitchens, Inc.'s newest downtown venture (in the former Mona Lizza BBQ spot). Upon entering, the first thing I notice is the mural work surrounding the room, work inspired by the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* album cover. The color and scale are fun and just the right amount psychedelic for an afternoon lunch, dinner with friends or just hanging for beer, drinks and pool.

The restaurant space is huge, but The Dive manages to break it up and keep it from feeling too cavernous. Dining area combines regular tables, high-top tables and big comfy booths for plenty of seating — there's also stage space for live music and a pool table up front to mix it up a little. The booths separate the front dining area from additional pool tables and the bar in back. Walls, ceiling and light fixtures are painted black, which highlights the mural work and light colored concrete floors. Downstairs space offers a gaming lounge (for those who prefer to take the couch sports away from home).

Wait-staff all wear classic rainbow bright, tie-dyed T-shirts. Tons of stuff to choose from on the menu — including 12 snacks and appetizers, 10 different salads, 10 specialty sandwiches and six specialty entrees.

all sprinkled with beige-colored toasted peanuts. The color, however, belies a generous amount of very nice salad. Veggies are all crisp and fresh, and the dressing has a great coconut flavor that I like very much. Maybe slices of red pepper or a sprinkle of parsley or cilantro would enhance the final presentation? Wings — I love wings — are covered in the super tasty chili-lime dressing: nice and spicy, with good tangy-ness, notably different from the traditional red pepper sauce. Probably a dozen pieces come on the plate, though they seem, individually, a little lean and fried almost too dry for my taste. Nonetheless, they make a nice addition to the salad, and I have enough of both dishes left for a to-go carton.

Couple of things I wish I had done differently for my first experience at The Dive: I wish I had had more time for a leisurely meal, maybe a whole evening to hang out over dinner, live music, drinks and pool — this seems like the ideal way to enjoy the place. And I wish I had come in with a friend or friends to get a broader perspective on the big menu. Nonetheless, this first little taste definitely has me excited to get back for another visit. If you like fancy-ish bar food and atmosphere with a mild psychedelic twist, check out The Dive.

844 Olive St. 345-8489. 11 am to 1 am, seven days a week. \$\$.

In the words of Fear, "More beer! More beer!"

The items are mostly twists on classic bar food and burger/sandwich/salad items. There are also extensive cocktail, wine, beer and non-alcoholic beverages to choose from.

I order Spicy Yucatan Wings (deep-fried chicken wings tossed in chili-lime Sauce, served with ranch dressing, \$5), a Thai This salad (noodles — angel hair pasta, I think — bean sprouts, julienned vegetables, all covered with peanut coconut dressing and served with bread and butter, \$5.95), and a mug of the house-brewed root beer (\$2.75). The waitperson helping me knows I'm pressed for time and manages to get everything in front of me for a quick eat and run.

The root beer comes first, and it's delightful, sweet and just-right fizzy, with a subtle but rich licorice taste at the back of the sweetness. The Thai salad and wings are next. The thing I notice first about the salad is that it seems to be all beige — beige noodles and bean sprouts, with peppers and red onions colored beige by the peanut-coconut dressing,

Leftovers

In the words of Fear, "More beer! More beer!" This was our rally cry for Friday, Feb. 5, the first night of **KLCC's 2004 Microbrew Fest**.

Great music by the Café Ramblers (though not as many dancers as you would expect) and a fine selection of microbrews, hard ciders and wines. My favorite for the night was organic Free Range Red by Portland's Laurelwood Brewery — nice and hoppy. (Laurelwood also had the best party favors: silver-colored keychain bottle openers.) Friend Greg said of Vermont's Wolavers Oatmeal Stout (dark and rich as a chocolate-coffee milkshake), "This and a biscuit, and you've got dinner." We cruised the Mega Music used CD and record sale, where I found some traditional Tahitian dance music and a maybe-questionable Ryan Adams CD — not too shabby for a Friday night out.

Would love to hear about Saturday night's events: e-mail food@eugeneweekly.com. **ew**

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