

# Where's the Beef?

## THE BATTLE OF THE BURGER AND BREW **By Dave Constantin**

### The Original

6th Street Bar and Grill has been a Eugene institution for more than 30 years. Every Tuesday night, savvy locals spill into the narrow bar area, dominated by UO football memorabilia, to lay down a clean six dollars and walk away content.

The bar and restaurant areas are separate and distinct. The bar entrance commands the street, offering an immediate, unobstructed view of the entire inside. The restaurant by comparison is surprisingly elegant and understated. The décor is all blacks and crimsons, dimly lit with a gothic-modern feel that looks deceptively expensive. All very nice, except that in the summer the place is kept meat-locker cold. Despite the differences in atmosphere, the two areas share an identical menu which, at a glance, seems like pretty standard extended-item sports bar fare. If you're going for the burger and brew, stick to the bar side — it just feels right.

Only one burger is offered for the special on Tuesday, the aptly-named "6th Street Burger." A note for vegetarians (if you bothered reading past the headline of this article): 6th Street offers a Gardenburger for the same price, a refreshing change from the perplexing up-charge "penalty" many establishments impose for this switch.

The 6th Street Burger is actually multiple burgers in one, starting with an impressive toppings list that can be scaled back one item at a time. With the works, you'll get bacon, grilled onions and mushrooms, cheddar, swiss and guacamole, as well as lettuce, tomato and mayo. This comes with a side of fries and a choice of any beer on the menu. 6th Street has about 18 beers on tap, with another 16 in bottles. Aside from an exceptionally hard strip of bacon, the burger was good, with some truly tasty guacamole giving it a Tex-mex flare. All in all, you can't go wrong paying six bucks for a spread like this.

### Nice Shell

At Turtle's on 28th and Willamette, ambiance rules. Though the vaguely Southwestern décor is light and open, with the tables relatively close together, the place seems to glow with warmth. A beautiful, Koa wood bar dominates the back of the restaurant and is curved to aid conversation, adding to the intimate atmosphere. In a place like this, everything tastes better, even a no-frills cheeseburger. For \$7 on a Monday night, that's exactly what you get — along with some shoestring fries and a beer, of course. The burger is a behemoth on a sesame seed bun, lettuce, tomato, pickles on the side, all in a foil-lined basket. Very retro-American. The meat wasn't as seasoned as I would have liked, but some would argue it's better to leave salting to the customer anyway.

For the discriminating faux burger devotee, the Boca makes a welcome appearance alongside the familiar Gardenburger on Turtle's menu. But just when you thought it was safe to swap out, get ready to make a 50 cent offering to the offended beef gods. No matter, though: Even if you're in it just for the brew side of the equation, \$2 pints all day long on

Mondays should put it all in perspective. The Turtle's menu doesn't end at burgers, of course, and that wonderful ambiance is poised to get even better in the near future. I spoke with owner Kate Bonéy briefly about her plans to expand the restaurant.

"There used to be a frame shop next door," she said. "We'll be renovating that, along with our kitchen. We hope to have it done by the end of October." Bonéy says she envisions a piano bar in that space with live music every night of the week and a reprieve from the under-age crowd. But she is also careful to explain, "I'm not going for a hoity-toity kind of place, I'm going for what I think the neighborhood wants." Judging by Bonéy's continued success and the turnout when I visited, it's clear the neighborhood wants more of whatever Turtle's has to offer.

### Chasing the "Cornucoma"

For a serious burger experience, head over to the Cornucopia Bottle Market at 17th and Lincoln on Monday night, where for \$8.50 you can put together the special from a selection of award-winning burgers and a hefty list of micro-brews. The ambiance here is very casual, almost café. The cozy, open-air patio out back is a great for a relaxed, summer-dining experience.

"This all evolved out of a dusty little store," said Verna Ivy, who has been serving up the burgers, brews and everything in between for about three of

restaurant's four years in existence. Relics of the old business remain as market display cases, housing various sandwiches, bottled soft drinks, bakery items and an impressive collection of bottled beers. It's all about the menu though: expansive, unpretentious and offering three meals a day, seven days a week.

The burger list should satisfy every palate. Of course, for the vegetarians, or for those who just don't dig on cow, a chicken breast or Gardenburger (called "vurgers" here) can be substituted for no extra charge. Personally, I opted for the Jero's bacon cheese burger with pepper jack cheese, as per Verna's high recommendation. I wasn't disappointed.

The patty was literally draped over the full-size bun, and further weighted down by two perfectly-cooked bacon strips and nice, crisp lettuce and tomato. The fries were a little insipid, though a dousing of salt and pepper were enough to give them some life. The thing that will stick with me, though, is that my food was served hot, wonderfully, mercifully, hot! If that's a regular occurrence, it's reason enough to go back.

As for the brew, I chose the house beer from Hawk's Brewery, called Frog's Wort. It's hoppy like an I.P.A., but with a good balancing of sweetness from some thickening malts — a great burger brew. Otherwise, there's the always changing selection of 10 micro brews on tap and a plethora of bottled varieties. They also have a decent wine selection. Cheers to the Cornucopia for an excellent burger and brew experience. \*



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