

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA

Coast Weekend's local
restaurant review

Beach N' Brew is, humbly, what it is

Review and photos by
THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA
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Beach N' Brew doesn't pretend to be anything but what it is: a dive-y blue-collar pub with some greasy grub.

A block south of Broadway in downtown Seaside, Beach N' Brew offers relief from the tourist crunch. It's a locally facing place where workers unwind, catch up on gossip and plunk dollars into the video lottery.

Classic rock radio on the speakers brought the Beach N' Brew into better focus. Perhaps no song captured the vibe better than the George Thorogood's hard-luck, rent-seeking blues, "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer."

I asked a bartender what was good. He highlighted the burgers, adding all was "solid bar food." It falls into two basic categories: meats between bread, and fried things. Sometimes they're one and the same.

I began with the Hot Wings (\$7.50). There were six of them, big and meaty with the sauce on the side, which I'm a fan of; not being slathered, sitting in sauce, the skin stays crisp. You dunk the wing at the last minute and get the best of both worlds.

Of the few seafood options — all fried — I chose the Fish Burger (\$11.95). The good-sized, beer-battered hunk of halibut had a nice crunch. It was familiar, as well as a reasonably clean, lean, healthy-ish alternative within these walls. Along with lettuce, onion and tomato, the sesame seed bun was painted with tartar sauce. Just in case, a small barrel brimming with tartar was included on the plate — enough for maybe three or four more sandwiches, spread and dipped liberally. Such a waste.

As a side, I ordered coleslaw but received macaroni salad. (It was oily and peppery with flecks of



Double Cheeseburger



Philly Steak



Hot Wings

celery and bacon bits.) It wouldn't be the only time my order at Beach N' Brew was discombobulated. On another visit, I was mistakenly delivered an entrée I didn't order, rather than the two I did. It was cleared up, and in the end I got what I asked for. And while perhaps a bit absent-minded, the help was good-natured and contrite.

The Philly Steak (\$8.75) was dense and greasy. The name — sans "cheese" — was a tad

instructive; there could've been more. What there was of the melted Swiss, though, with its mild, dry funk, was integral. The beef itself was thin, layered thick and unspectacular.

The Grilled Reuben was much better (\$8.75). Though the rye bread could've been given a more rigorous toasting in hopes of withstanding the sandwich's soppy juices, the stacks of pastrami, kraut plus Swiss cheese and Thousand

Island hit that gooey, salty, fatty, briny, sweet mark. I could imagine, late night, maybe after a few too many, melting into sloppy bliss. It was the most irresistible thing I had at Beach N' Brew — the one thing that, after I'd eaten my fill, kept me coming back for more.

Of course I tried the burgers. On that evening, it was a daily special: a Double Cheeseburger on a discount (basically two patties for the price of one, \$7.95).

BEACH N' BREW

Rating: ★★

405 Ave. A
Seaside, Ore., 97138

503-738-6447

Hours: Friday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 12 a.m.; Sunday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Price: \$ – Easy to fill up on less than \$10

Service: Casual and a bit discombobulated.

Vegetarian / Vegan Options: A few fried things.

Drinks: Full bar, soda

KEY TO STAR RATING SYSTEM

- ★ Below average
- ★★ Average
- ★★★ Good
- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★★ Best in region

Together, the pair of thin, pre-formed, frozen patties were about the size of a proper burger. Like everything else, it was absolutely familiar, drive-in style all the way. And hey, sometimes that'll do the trick, especially if you're starving and only have \$10. (Though, once again, with the burger, my order was slightly bungled: I asked for jack cheese and got cheddar.)

And that's about all there is to it. Sure, there are chicken strips, fries, tater tots and the like — all exactly as you would imagine.

Smartly — or perhaps mercifully — Beach N' Brew doesn't venture outside this basic bar food comfort zone. Unlike many of its brethren, Beach N' Brew doesn't bother adding salads or steaks to the menu. And they shouldn't: The salads would be watery, rarely ordered and probably topped with shredded cheese (don't do this!), and the steaks like gristle-y, chewy boot heels. Beach N' Brew acquiesces: There are better places to go for salad or steak — or, for that matter, any semblance of nuance.

They are, humbly, what they are. **CW**