

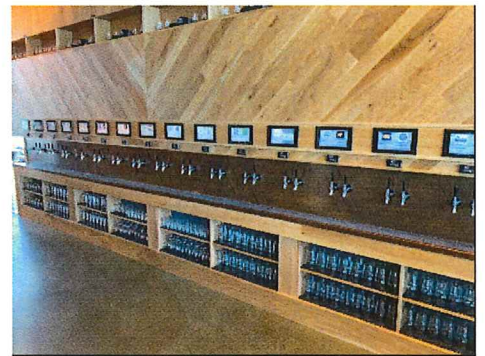
Barlow's Public House is 'yummish'

New restaurant satisfying addition to waterfront

By Rick Browne, for The Columbian Published: October 18, 2019, 6:04am



The view from Barlow's Public House. (Rick Browne/for The Columbian)



First of all, I want to congratulate Brian and Alicia Rummer for opening Barlow's Public House, an exciting new restaurant on Vancouver's waterfront. It's very crisp and neat, seating 200 inside, and has perhaps the best view of any Clark County restaurant from the large outdoor deck, which seats 95.

Also, Barlow's innovative and unique system of letting customers draw their own beer is fun to use and, I think, the wave of the future in beer pubs.

Barlow's has only been open since August, so the restaurant is still trying to find its identity. I am a bit confused by the menu. I know it's supposed to mirror the owners' lifelong path across America, but I find it difficult to assess the character and genre of Barlow's.

When you see menu items like fried green tomatoes, NOLA Beignets, shrimp and grits, Mississippi Chuck Roast, Louisiana Style Debris (a messy, yummy sandwich), fried catfish, gumbo and Louisiana Seafood Boil, you think, "Ah! Southern cuisine." But then you discover chicken enchiladas, jalapeno cornbread, Texas Nachos, street tacos, huevos rancheros and chilaquiles: "Oh yum! Southwest cuisine."

But no, the introductory paragraph on the menu emphasizes a connection to the Pacific Northwest and local ingredients. The menu is actually sort of a PacificNorthwestDeepSouthTexMex fusion. Hence my confusion.

But all that being said, the food we sampled was excellent. The service was warm, informative and friendly. And as far as I'm concerned, their geographic focus doesn't matter. What was put on our plates was top drawer wherever it came from.

We started with the Fried Green Tomatoes & Dungeness Crab Stack (\$12). The tomatoes are served tower-style, interleaved with Dungeness crab in a mayonnaise-based remoulade, with micro sprouts. (The sprouts were only on the top layer. The bottom layers contained frisée. Hmm.) When we ordered, our server shared that the restaurant was out of green tomatoes, and were using red instead, but we went ahead. We shouldn't have. The Columbian is becoming a rare example of a news organization with local, family ownership. Subscribe today to support local journalism and help us to build a stronger community.

Next we couldn't resist their tempting Bacon Lollipops (\$11), which are three quarter-inch-thick strips of bacon prepared with brown sugar, a sea salt glaze and a smidge of cayenne pepper, served on skewers. The "lollipops" are sweet and salty, with just a small glow in the aftertaste. If you order, eat them right away, as thick bacon cools quickly and can get chewy.

For our main course, my companion ordered Alicia's BBQ Shrimp and Grits (\$21). She had never had grits, and despite my suggestion that grits are glorified, tasteless porridge, she went ahead. I'm glad she did. Somehow the chef has come up with a great grit. Cream cheese, garlic, lemon, butter and Worcestershire sauce added a ton of flavor, as did the chunks of andouille sausage. The five perfectly cooked and moist large tiger shrimp and the delightful boiled crawfish garnish made us wish for more of these tasty crustaceans. These grits I like!

Since I wanted to try something more Northwestern, I opted for Barlow's Ribs (\$21). A generous serving of their boneless "slow-roasted beef ribs" (fork tender, nicely sauced and delicious) were surrounded by a large portion of Parmesan Truffle Herb Fries and pickled slaw. Two minor complaints here. Neither of us could find a trace of Parmesan or truffle on the fries, and the only

herb was the tiniest of sprinkling of what I believe was parsley. I thought the slaw had too many thinly sliced jalapenos, but my companion loved it. "The best I've ever had," she said. "I'd come back here just for the slaw."

Appetizers range from \$7 for deviled eggs to \$24 for Charbroiled Oysters. Salads and soups are listed from \$7 for Roasted Tomato Soup or Wedge Caesar, to \$15 for the Farmers Chef or Cobb salads. Entrées go from \$14 for Fish N Chips (cod, unless you want catfish) to \$24 for Barlow's Louisiana Seafood Boil. Lighter fare includes burgers, tacos, a vegetarian stir fry, and that Debris sandwich, all ranging from \$11 to \$14.

Now to the beer, which you can serve yourself via a wall of taps. You hand over a credit card, and the server will come back with a special card that you then insert into a slot under a small digital screen on the tap wall. As you pour, the screen lets you monitor the ounces and price as the glass fills. The 30 taps feature 22 brews, two ciders, and six wines. If you're thirsty for stronger stuff, the bar features 150 bourbons or your favorite cocktails.

Barlow's has a limited dessert menu, which offers up a Bourbon Caramel Milkshake (\$11), a Bourbon Chocolate Cake (\$9), a Double Bourbon Dessert (one of each of the above at \$14), and the Eighth Race Pie (a bourbon pecan pie, with chocolate chip filling and bourbon pie crust, \$6.95). Get the idea? You could get a DUI arrest for just eating dessert here.

Overall, our dinner there was quite good and so satisfying that we didn't order dessert. My companion summed it up: "Yummish."