

Todd A. Price
OffBeat Magazine (3/07)
Review: Tucker's Tavern



DINING OUT

Tucker's Tavern

Two guys jogged past me as I approached Tucker's Tavern. They were getting a midday workout and I was headed to the home of the deep-fried burger. I felt guilty even before my first bite.

I'd heard about Tucker's for years, but I had never tasted its deep-fried burger. After the original CBD location flooded, I figured that the deep-fried burger was another culinary treasure lost to Katrina. Would anyone have bet their FEMA checks that Tucker's would return? It's back, though, in the Warehouse District near the Contemporary Arts Center and on higher ground.

"Get stuffed, get fried," proclaimed the glass entry doors. Inside, the music was loud. The mainly male lunch crowd sat in the bar instead of the dining room. The guys looked more comfortable in the bar, even if they weren't drinking.

The surprisingly large menu includes wraps, salads, sandwiches and even plate lunches such as red beans and rice. In the end, though, it's food better suited to feed the hungry than thrill them. The regular burger was average. A Cuban press sandwich was basically a ham and pork sandwich with mustard and pickles. I didn't even try the plate lunches, because the waiter assured me I was better off with a stuffed and fried burger.

The Big Al was my choice, a half-pound hamburger stuffed with mushrooms and pepper Jack cheese. I braced myself for an outrageous experience, a meal that might stick out its tongue and shake its fist.

When my Big Al arrived, however, it was tame. The brown mound, which looked like a cross between a crab cake bulked up on steroids and a battered softball, sat exposed and undressed on a plain white bun. I fixed up the burger and took a wide bite. It tasted, well, like a burger with a little extra crunch. More than anything, it reminded me of the hamburgers topped with fried onions sold at mid-level chains.

But that's not the story I'm telling my friends. Oh no, that deep-fried burger was over the top. You wouldn't believe it. And me, I was crazy enough to eat one. *896 Magazine St., 522-0440, Mon.-Fri. 10:30 a.m. until close, Sat.-Sun. noon until close.*

—Todd A. Price