



PASTY



SURF & TURF (PRIME RIB AND SHRIMP)



COD DINNER

Guler's Corner

Story By Danny Fairchild
Photos by Ann Jegerlehner

Can I get a hell yeah for Wisconsin bars? They're unpretentious and welcoming in

everything, including the decor. (They'll replace the ancient wood paneling on the walls when they come crumbling down on their own, thank you, and not a second sooner.) They have all your big brewery brands along with some of the best small breweries in Wisconsin, and therefore, the United States, and therefore, the world. (Don't kid yourself, Europe. We've been outbeering you for over 20 years.) And the food! I wouldn't go so far as to call it gourmet (and "gourmet"

doesn't mean "good," anyway), but I'd call it delicious and comforting and proudly Wisconsin. Someone more pretentious and less welcoming might characterize a Wisconsin bar as a dive, but that ain't it. I don't know what those people's problem is. Maybe they're not Badger fans or something and can't just be cool. But let me make this clear: Wisconsin bars aren't dives. They're lazy rivers.

And so, for Father's Day, I was taken to Guler's Corner for the very first time. Guler's Corner is situated almost exactly halfway between Cuba City and Hazel Green. It's the kind of place where, if it were in Iowa or Illinois, it would be closed these past 30 years and showing every day of its neglect. But we're in Wisconsin. So Guler's Corner has been around longer than you've been alive and will likely be around long after everyone who loves you has forgotten the sound of your laughter. Everyone, that is, except Guler's Corner.

Folks, I feel I've missed out on some bits of culture by growing up so far away from a Wisconsin bar. Stupid Western Iowa. Nobody makes pasty over there. Nobody. Do you know about pasty and its cultural significance to Wisconsin? Just for clarification: "Pasty" is not pronounced "pay-stee." It rhymes with "nasty." But not "nasty" as in yucky. "Nasty" as in sexy. As in, "Ooh yah, baby. Let's get nasty with some pasty." It's a folded pastry filled with the meat and veggies a Southwestern Wisconsin miner needs to get through a hard day's work. My Annie, who took the food pics for me for this column, makes pasty from time-to-time. It's a family thing for her. And now it's a family thing for me, too. And it's awesome. That said, you don't find it on restaurant menus very often. Not even in Wisconsin.

But guess where you CAN order it? Yup! The absolute saints at Guler's Corner Bar & Grill are keeping pasty alive! It's not a regular menu item, but it's very often

a special, especially on Sundays. Like on Father's Day. I didn't order the pasty, though. I wanted to. But Ann ordered the pasty. Her dad ordered the pasty. Her mom ordered the pasty. My parents probably would have ordered the pasty, but they've both been dead for years. And while Guler's pasty is worth a visit all on its own, I can't JUST highlight the pasty. Not if I want to hit my word count, anyway. So instead of ordering the pasty, I settled for the prime rib and shrimp. Yes, instead of pasty, I SETTLED for Surf & Turf. I wanted pasty so bad that the only substitute was the most expensive thing Guler's served that day. Which was also awesome, and I'll tell you all about it, but I'm not done with the pasty.

Guler's pasty is of Cornish design with ground beef (some folks use stew beef) and all the accompanying veggies you'd expect in a similar dish like a pot pie. Then Guler's ladles a good measure of gravy over all that and puts it down in front of you. Mmm. Flaky pastry, ground beef that's easy to portion out with every bite, veggies that have given their all but haven't gotten all mushy about it. Hearty and savory and absolutely satisfying.

Pasty. Get it in you.

The Surf & Turf was also a Father's Day special. And let me just tell you now: Guler's has a pretty respectable menu. Their steak, fish, chicken, etc. are all supper-club quality. In fact, if you wanted to call Guler's Corner a supper club, not many would correct you. So, it's a good menu... but it seems to me, the menu is only there to provide the consistency you expect at a Wisconsin bar. Where Guler's Corner shines is in their specials. With them all written up for the day on the huge chalkboard, it almost looks like they have as many specials as regular menu items. And while I appreciate the consistency of a regular menu, I can guarantee that every time I go to Guler's Corner in the

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- 21 BBQ
- 24 Meatloaf Cupcakes
- 25 Patty Melts
- 26 Otherside Chicken
- 27 Ham Salad
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BACON CHEDDAR CHICKEN SANDWICH

future, I'm going to be looking forward to seeing what's up on the Specials board. The prime rib was succulent and seemingly made just for me to my liking. And the shrimp were fried up in a tempura-like batter. Nom, nom, nom. I filled up on other people's pasty and barely touched my prime rib. Fortunately, prime rib makes for awesome leftovers, especially Guler's.

My son ordered the bacon cheddar chicken sandwich. Look at that supper-clubbable bun and those housemade fries! Ooooh, those fries! Who doesn't appreciate a fry completely made in house? And the chicken was grilled to unquestionable doneness without being dry. I'm sure it's a tactic to ensure fast service, but if you don't like your food to touch, Guler's is your place. Look at that coleslaw and those pickles cordoned off from the rest of the food. It's there if you want to invite it. If not, it can't possibly crash the party. Even the sandwich's mayo comes on the side, ready to pass off to someone who wants it if you don't. I get the feeling that you hear people say, "If you're not going to eat that, pass it here!" a lot at Guler's Corner. Same with the Surf & Turf. I did NOT give away the pictured potato salad. I wanted it. And I ate the hell out of it.

Oh! And your choice of accompanying coleslaw, potato salad, or macaroni salad? They're all the creamy kind. Creamy to their Wisconsinite core.

I'm not sure what compelled Ann's lovely mother to order the fried cod when we all had so much food already, but it means I get to tell you about it, so make sure you thank her next time you see her. Look, I already told you that Guler's food is supper-club-esque. You know damn well what a supper club can do with a piece of beer-battered cod. Expect the same and maybe better from Guler's.

As is my custom, let me tell you about the bathrooms. It's an old building. So the bathrooms are old. It's a Wisconsin bar

bathroom. It's not "nice," but it's nicely clean. Pee and/or poop without fear.

Oh! I almost forgot about the beverages! Full bar, of course. Because it's a bar. For soda, you're looking at Pepsi products on tap, Coke products in cans. And when you order a lemonade, you're not getting the premixed stuff out of the fountain gun. You're getting a glass bottle of Calypso lemonade. You may recognize Calypso lemonade as the fancy lemonade sold in the produce section instead of the soft drink section of your grocery store. It's damn good lemonade, my friendlies, if you haven't experienced it. Honestly, the mix stuff from the fountain gun would have been fine. I don't think I've ever seen Calypso served in restaurants before.

But then, as you can see, Guler's is absolutely full of surprises.

And let me just say it one more time: Pasty! ■

Guler's Corner

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