



burgers from a bus

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When I walked into Captain Roy's restaurant, it immediately took me back to my childhood. My father was the men's basketball coach at Upper Iowa University, and after every home game we went to the lone bar in downtown Fayette, Iowa. Dad gave his radio interview while I snacked on chicken strips and sat on the laps of family friends as they drank cheap beer. If we weren't in Fayette, we were at our cabin on the Mississippi River doing the same thing. The welcoming atmosphere of a small town local bar is what I grew up with, and Captain Roy's encapsulated it well.

Located on the Neal Smith Bike Trail at Birdland Marina, Captain Roy's is easily accessible by any form of transportation. Even in the chilly spring weather, I could tell it was a place I wanted to come back to in the summer. Seagulls flew overhead, and boat docks sloshed in the Des Moines River. As appealing as the outdoor seating was, it was freezing so we chose to sit inside.

After walking in, we stood for a while, not sure whether we should seat ourselves or wait. We ended up moseying over to the bar and chatting with the bartender. My first glance at the menu surprised me. Though smaller than most restaurant menus, Roy's was diverse, especially for a bar. They offered an array of sandwiches, waffles and even a veggie burger. After analyzing the menu, we decided to order the Garbage Burger and Chicken & Waffles.

The bartender put our order in for us and instructed us to take a seat anywhere. There was only one other table occupied, but we were later assured that Tuesdays aren't particularly busy.

I examined the décor as we waited, and I was a little confused. I assumed from the name that Captain Roy's would be more of an aquatic-themed establishment, but I was mistaken. Amps and microphones were tucked in a corner for when bands perform on site. Colored lights and buoys are placed here and there. Antique signs and bike parts lined the walls; it was a hodgepodge of items that somehow fit together and gave the place a personality.

After a short wait, our food arrived in paper food boats, reminding us that we were not in the average restaurant.

The Garbage Burger was piled high with coleslaw, curly fries, cheddar cheese and a fried egg. It was juicy and tasted delicious. I really enjoyed the crunch the coleslaw added to the burger but thought it could use something extra. It needed something with a kick, such as chipotle mayo, to tie it all together. The curly fries weren't anything special; I got my usual ranch to dip them in. You can judge a lot about a place by the quality of their ranch, and this ranch was good.

Next, I tried the Chicken & Waffles. There wasn't anything special about the chicken strips, and it was a bit of a letdown. The waffle on the other hand was tasty and unique. There was something different about it; we decided they must have put a vanilla glaze on it because it was very sweet. We almost didn't need the syrup to dip it in. The food was a step up from your typical fried bar food but a step down from restaurants like Centro or Vivian's.

The pricing of our meals was pretty reasonable. My burger was \$11 with the fries and a drink while the Chicken & Waffles were \$10. The serving size for the Chicken & Waffles was smaller than I imagined. I had hoped there would be bit more to it.

I genuinely liked the food at Captain Roy's. On the weekends, the restaurant hosts live music, supporting local bands and keeping customers entertained. On event nights, the bar is usually lively and filled with people. During my visit, the atmosphere was lacking, due to the fact that I visited on a chilly weeknight.

Captain Roy's is overflowing with personality, from the hanging lights outside to the big orange school bus that houses the kitchen. We stopped inside the bus before we left to chat with one of the chefs. He was extremely friendly and assured us that the establishment is usually swarming with people in the summer.

Overall, I enjoyed my trip to Captain Roy's restaurant. It's not a fancy restaurant by any means, but the casual bar-like nature reminds me of home and that's a feeling you can't find many places in Des Moines. I will definitely be back during the summer months!