

SEPTEMBER 29, 2004

Falcon Tavern

BY [CHUCK MCHENRY](#)

As food for thought, The Falcon Tavern offers some background narrative on the Peregrine falcons that have found favorable hunting grounds amid the concrete canyons of Boise's downtown high-rises. The menu even suggests lucky diners may actually spot these speedy raptors from the tavern windows. What the menu doesn't get into, gratefully, is the unappetizing way a peregrine dive-bombs hapless pigeons in mid-flight and disembowels them on window ledges, eagerly scarfing down entrails. *Hey, how's that chicken sandwich, Marge?*

Thankfully, there were no stray feathers to be found when we hit this quaint pub for an early dinner. Small and inviting, the interior nods to unpretentious dining and drinking that many folks hanker for after a long workday. No fancy-schmancy furniture, or hyper-baroque wall decor, or nouveau-chic utensils that attempt to improve upon the concept and function of the spoon. With a dark (but not stark) interior, recessed lighting and just enough chairs and tables to comfortably contain no more than 60 or so patrons, the Falcon Tavern is exactly the kind of joint the M.E. and I enjoy most: a place to have a decent and decently priced meal and a good beer or two.

We found a nice corner booth with bar stool seating, and our waiter immediately brought our menus, took our drink order, expertly prattled off the daily specials, then left us to ourselves for exactly the right amount of time. High marks, already.

We had just begun looking over the extensive menu when the M.E.'s sister (the Vegetarian Architect) joined us. The menu sports over 20 sandwiches, 10 burger combinations and a fine selection of "regular" and eclectic salads. I salute any establishment that is willing to put forth such an extravagant selection in such an unpretentious manner. The V.A. asked our server about making meat items meatless and was immediately assured it would be no problem. Whew! Another eatery roadblock averted.

The M.E. went with the Hot Pressed Sandwich Cubano--Rum marinated pork butt (just the way Mom used to make it!), smoked ham, pickles, provolone, and chile-spiked mayo. The V.E. ordered the chorizo and mozzarella sandwich without the chorizo. Having already heard that the Falcon's burgers were fabulous, I ordered the Falcon Deluxe with lettuce, tomato, sweet red onion, "tavern" sauce and Grafton Village sharp cheddar.

It is rather unlike the M.E. to do the two things she did after biting into her sandwich. The first is to talk with her mouth full (she usually has much better table manners), the second is to bleat glorious generalities (a demon no-no for journalists). Her sister would have corrected such indelicate behavior, but she was likewise unceremoniously wolfing down her sandwich and nodding appreciatively. Not to be outdone, I attempted to share with them how extraordinarily tasty my 1/2 Kobe 1/2 chuck beef hamburger was, but all I could manage was to send small, happy spurts of tavern sauce cascading down my chin.

We grazed that table, quaffed our beers (they have Guinness on tap!) and wandered out completely and wonderfully sated, our wary eyes turned toward the heavens, spotting for swooping peregrines and plummeting pigeons.

*--Chuck McHenry likes to play Pokemon Monopoly with Brazilian currency.*

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BY [ERIN RYAN](#)

In keeping with a winning philosophy of good beer and working man's gourmet, the recently opened Falcon Tavern is another hot spot on the 8th and Idaho strip. But unlike its starched uncle Red Feather, big brother Bittercreek Alehouse or distant cousin Reef, this cozy spot is somewhere the guys from *Cheers* would go for burgers and brew.

After hearing praises sung of the cornmeal battered onion rings and the grilled chorizo and mozzarella sandwich, the boy and I decided to dip a toe in the Tavern's lunchtime waters. We seated ourselves at a table and admired the cool, upscale pub atmosphere created by thick blinds and dark, polished wood. The boy desperately wanted a Guinness (on tap) but decided 11 a.m. was maybe not the best time to indulge. So our friendly waitress brought us water with lemon slices while we looked over the surprisingly extensive menu. I was expecting a few variations on the classic burger and maybe a Cobb salad, but the selection includes six innovative mixtures of greens and goodies, six mouth-watering appetizers, three specials, nine gourmet burgers, two desserts, an entire page of sandwiches and a list of side dishes including sweet and sour coleslaw.

As usual, I was stumped. Would I fill my gurgling tummy with a steak sandwich of Kobe loin, smoked pepper mayo, lettuce, tomato and Italian onion or a marinated Portobello with fire grilled jumbo mushrooms and chiles, Vermont sharp cheddar, crisp lettuce, tomato and smoky mayo on a warm French roll? Neither! I couldn't resist our waitress's suggestion of the hot pressed sandwich Cubano of rum marinated pork butt (yes, pork *butt*), smoked ham, dill pickle, provolone cheese and chile-spiked mayo on grilled bread. On the side, I went for the onion rings, which have already garnered enough fame and intrigue to win the coveted Best of Boise seal (thanks to some love from the starch-obsessed editorial staff). The boy ordered an "All-American" burger, or a quarter-pound, all-beef patty, aged cheddar, purple onion, lettuce, beefsteak tomato and smoky bacon on a toasted roll (the verdict is still out as to whether the "French" roll qualifies as "All-American").

The first bite of pork butt (I can't resist) was so hot I couldn't really judge the flavor, but the texture was nice. The ham was thick and juicy and contrasted well with the dryer pork and crisp bread. My second bite provided a cross-section of seasoned meat, tangy pickle and enough cheese to make a pizza. The boy was excited about the cheese-gasm, but I spent a lot of time pulling strands from my face and catching overflow in my lap. And though the mayo was advertised as "chile-spiked," it added only a bland creaminess. Suggestions? Less cheese, more seasoning. The onion rings were just as advertised--thick slices of red onion battered with chile-dusted cornmeal and served with a buttermilk/horseradish dipping sauce. They were a welcome change from the usual fried bread-crumbs variety, and the dipping sauce was delicious.

The boy's choice was one of those takes on a classic that makes you chmile (a.k.a. chew/smile). The meat was rich and smoky and the toppings were fresh and flavorful, especially the bacon and tomato. The fries were a nice blend of crisp and soft (my favorite) with a tasty sprinkling of grated Parmesan. We helped each other finish and decided that next time, I'll ask for light cheese and two pints of Guinness.

*--Erin Ryan will eat anything if it's covered in chocolate.*