

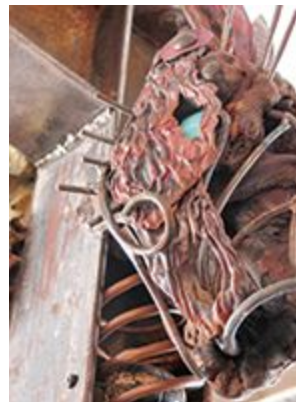
Moo & Brew Burger & Beer Joint

photos & words: Ellen Gurley



Moo & Brew recently opened for business and almost every publication in town is writing about them. My City Magazine is only late to that party because I had to make a three visit investigation for my article. There was just too much to take in that I had to return again a few times. Let's go ahead and get the star out of the way so we can spotlight some of the rest of the attractions. The show stealer is Large Marge, of course (photograph 1). She is their signature Bloody Mary and only comes out on Saturdays and Sundays (and some holidays). She boasts Wisconsin cheese curds, carrots, celery, and olives, but that's just the beginning. She also features a meal on a stick that prevents you from needing anything else to eat or drink (for at least a couple of minutes). Large Marge's skewer has an angus burger in between two grilled cheese sliders. Stay with me. On top of that is a jalapeno firecracker, smoked apple wood bacon, and two pickled fried green tomatoes. She is made with Tito's vodka and, in case she was feeling lonely, Large Marge is served with a tiny Miller High Life.

Large Marge isn't the only cute thing in the house. When it comes to drinks, she has a friend on the menu called the Whiskey Dick. Owner Zach Current has been a cheeky one since I met him and his wife, Melissa, at UNC-Charlotte in the nineties. I expected nothing less than that personality to come through with his baby, Moo & Brew. And when it comes to the name, save your breath, they know that there is an annual, local festival by the same name. They are *related*. One of Current's business partners, Ken Thomas, runs the thing. In my mind, they pay homage to Joe Hooper's with a breakfast burger called the Farmer's Daughter and just to prove that great minds think alike, guess what Moo & Brew has in common with my father's restaurant, Cousin's in the '90's? They have a Jive Turkey sandwich. I love it. (Dear Pinky's Westside Grill, I was the first.) They also have a salmon sandwich and a take on some classics (stuffing their jalapenos with pimento cheese) but I'll let you figure it out in its entirety yourself when you get there.



I will tell you that the burger menu itself is a lot of fun and they encourage you to build your own and to enter it into an Instagram contest (beat the #burgerbossman). They will be featuring the best each month. I'm okay with that movement as long as they don't take away my favourite, the Way Out West Bison Burger (photograph 2). It is heaven at medium rare (my choice) with goat cheese, arugula, and a sun-dried tomato spread. I got it with the sweet potato fries which were perfect. My friend had the Fresh Produce (photograph 3) with some hand cut fries. She said that it was "pretty dang okay". We shared the Midwest Cheese Curds (photograph 4). They're beer battered and served with a tangy ranch. Good stuff.

I had to visit more than once to see Large Marge again, but also to take in the interior. More goes into a restaurant than food with cute names (that can also strut their stuff in flavour). They had Zach Sessions come in and do his craft (using metal, wood, and even a skull to portray Current's vision of Moo & Brew throughout the walls) (photographs 5, 6, and 7). (I met both Zachs as a 49er and, just so you know, Sessions is known for his work in many other local venues, with neighbour FuManChu Cupcakes' countertops and display cases being just one). Jason Blanchett (known as Calico Graves or the Midnight Ace to many) brought in his touch with his business, Iron Giant Fabrications, giving Current's vintage beer cans a handsome housing along the length of the booths (photograph 8). It takes a team to create a space that people will want to visit time and time again. Current and company (Ken Thomas and a fella who calls himself the buckaroo, Ian Terhune) have done just that. They have a gorgeous patio, a ton of taps, and a slew of people calling themselves regulars. Give

them a try and thank me later and tell `em Large Marge sent `cha.

1300 Central Ave., 28205, 980-585-4148, www.MooAndBrew.com