

BEER, BUFFALO, & CHAINSMOKERS

The Buffalo Inn offers good times for the downwardly mobile

By Stacy Davies

Off Route 66 in Upland—Foothill Boulevard to you young'uns—sits a slice of kitschy Americana. Built in 1929 and originally run by Louise "Lou" Haefner during an era when businesswomen shortened their names to affect a male, and therefore legitimate persona, the Buffalo Inn used to be the only thing on that strip of road for miles. Today it's nestled between other stuff, but across the street are some great retro pit stops like Hubcap Annie's (damn, we wish we needed hubcaps!), and a rock quarry that still gives off that desolate, antique vibe.

The big draw of the Buffalo Inn, however, isn't really its historic value, although the owners certainly take pride in their past. The charm of the BI is its outdoor seating—a bark-chips-covered patio surrounded by wild bougainvillea and rustic fencing, sheltered by drooping old trees and Christmas lights. In fact, once inside the patio, you'd never know you were planted next to a major roadway.

With 32 beers on tap, including their own Buffalo Inn Pale Ale, this is a BEER BAR with the kind of food that beer-pitcher-drinkers can tolerate—after 10 pints, you're just *hungry*, so who cares what it tastes like? It's not that the food is *bad*—in the traditional sense. The buffalo burger, made from real bison flown in from Wyoming, was pretty good with ketchup, and the fatted-calf steak was fine, but should have been cheaper. Keep in mind that this is the kind of joint where you eat on paper plates with plastic cutlery, and the picnic tables where you dine are seldom wiped down. Our waitress, a sweet, young gal, was more than happy to clean up the sticky beer residue after we asked her, though.

The regular hamburgers are decent, and the chili, when it's not cold (as ours was) is excellent. They also don't do fries here—only home cut potato chips that you can style up like any tubular version. But really, it's all about the beer and the smoking, and if you know that going in and expect nothing fancy—*nothing at all*—you'll be able to kick back, light up, and pound some brew to the back-drop of an acoustic-guitar-playing classic rocker. We had Jack McCoy when we went—a sort of Johnny Cash meets Neil Diamond with a little Monty Python thrown in. He did a Springsteen cover, some Eagles, and (ugh!) "Leaving on a Jet Plane." That was one of the first songs we learned on our guitar when we were 12.

Besides the Hootie guy next to us who spat tobacco juice over the side of his chair as we ate, the let's-drink-pitchers-of-blonde-beer-at-6 p.m.-on-a-Sunday-because-we're-college-students-or-pretty-close-to-it atmosphere reminded us of those very same sweet days so long ago. Unfortunately, there were about 25 people *way* older than us (and we're *oold*) who seemed to think those college days were still upon them. But what do we care—the upside to eating with the downwardly mobile is certain relaxation, and the Buffalo Inn has "kickback" in spades. **12**



Photo by Sally Egan

THE BUFFALO INN, 1816 W. FOOTHILL BLVD., UPLAND, (909) 981-5515. OPEN EVERY DAY, 11:30 A.M. TIL CLOSE. LIVE MUSIC THURS.-SUN.

dining guide

Average price per entree.

Under \$10 \$
 \$10-\$20 \$\$
 Over \$20 \$\$\$

BARSTOW

DiNapoli's Firehouse Pizza

Italian restaurant featuring appetizers, salads, specialty subs, pasta dinner specialties, and lasagna. 1358 E. Main St., Barstow, (760) 256-1094. \$\$

Idle Spurs Steakhouse

Casual dining atmosphere and great steaks. 690 Old Hwy., Barstow, (760) 256-8888. \$\$

CHINO

Flo's Airport Café

If only we could walk in and be waited on by Florence Jean Castleberry. Say it's so! Chino Airport, 7000 Meadow Ave., Bldg. A, Chino, (909) 597-3416. \$

Spunky Steer

We're not sure how appetizing this sounds, but check it and let us know. 11979 Central Avenue, Chino, (909) 628-6763. \$\$

CHINO HILLS

Li'keLi'ke Hawaiian BBQ Grill

Aloha! All your Hawaiian favorites, like BBQ chicken or Chicken *Kapsu*. If you love the food, you can buy your own franchise. Mahalo. 13089 Peyton Dr., #E, Chino Hills, (909) 628-0225. \$

CLAREMONT

Arufo's

Great Italian fare, especially the Aglio

Arrostito appetizer—bruschetta, bread, fresh garlic, sun-dried tomatoes, olives and a variety of pestos to dip it all in. Yum. 126 Yale Ave., Claremont, (909) 624-9624. \$\$

BC Café

Not the most beautiful place on Earth—looks like a regular old lhop or something, BCC scores big points on fantastic food and friendly staff. The stuffed pancakes are to die for. 701 S. Indian Hill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 482-1414. \$

Danson & Espiau's Restaurant

Formerly two separate restaurants that a few years ago decided to merge. They serve American and Mexican dishes and are most known for their salad, dressing and chips. Espiau's has been serving salad since 1928. 109 Yale Ave., Claremont, (909) 621-1818. \$\$

Darvish

This Persian palace offers all your favorite kabobs and there's a belly dancer on weekends, we hear. Call to confirm. 946 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 624-4910. \$\$\$

El Ranchero

Authentic Mexican food in a mellow atmosphere. Great for the price. 984 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 624-8824. \$

Harvard Square Café

Not a huge menu, HSC concentrates and perfects what they do serve. The eggs benedict are some of the best we've ever had, the penne arrabiata is killer, just like the shitake-encrusted pork loin. For light lunch fare, try the ham and brie baguette sandwich. 206 W. Bonita, Claremont (909) 626-7763. \$\$

Inka Trails

Peruvian food is the thing at this little known, but often passed by spot on Foothill Blvd. Small, intimate, with excellent food, try out the Lima-styled fare and check out

the Peruvian artwork. 1077 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 624-8299. www.inkatrailsrestaurant.com. \$\$

Nogi Japanese Restaurant

Besides the fact that this place offers some of the best sushi and tempura around, you gotta come here just to meet the owner. A former fashion designer, Keiko is *very* friendly and efficient—determined you have a perfect eating experience. 950 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont (909) 626-1582. \$\$

The Press

THE place for cool people in the upper IE. Lots of artists, educators (The Colleges are just across the street), musicians writers, etc., with palatable food and *excellent* Key Lime martinis. 129 Harvard Ave., Claremont (909) 625-4808. \$

Tutti Mangia

Upscale Italian restaurant with classy ambiance and great food. 102 Harvard Ave., Claremont (909) 625-4669. \$\$

Viva Madrid

This restaurant is our favorite in all of the upper IE. Artistic and eclectic décor and the occasional flamenco band complement an authentic, extensive Spanish menu featuring payalla and various potato, vegetable and warm fruit appetizers. The Sangria is superb. 225 Yale Ave., B, Claremont (909) 624-5500. www.vivamadrid.com. No reservations. \$\$\$

Yiannis Greek Restaurant

Everyone I know *loves* this place. 238 Yale Ave., Claremont, (909) 621-2413. \$\$

COLTON

Hawaiian Blues

There's nothing that goes better with oysters, lomi lomi, or the Kalua pork and cabbage than some grass-skirted blues singin'—that would be *you*, since this is a karaoke restaurant. But

please, no more "Tiny Bubbles." It makes us burp them up. 1280 E. Washington St., Ste. 10, Colton, (909) 370-3100. \$

Jean's French Restaurant

It's French food. In Colton. Let us know if they don't have frogs legs or brie. 592 N. La Cadena Dr., Colton, (909) 825-0905. \$\$

Pinnacle Peak Steak House

"Home of the famous cowboy steaks," grilled over an open mesquite fire. Hmmm... what does cowboy steak taste like? Serving dinner daily. 2533 S. La Cadena Dr., Colton, (909) 783-2543. \$\$

Ravi's India Cuisine

Serving authentic Indian food, made with spices imported from India. Specialties include Tandoori Chicken, Chicken Tikka, Tandoori Nan, and Masala Dosa. 1091 S. Mount Vernon Ave., Colton, (951) 824-1100. \$

Sayaka Japanese Restaurant

Sushi, sashimi, and nigiri, as well as *teppanyaki* alternatives like calamari, New York steak, and lobster tail, served in a sleek, contemporary setting. 1063 S. Mount Vernon Ave., Colton, (909) 824-6958. \$\$

Sassy Steer

Two levels decorated in the supper-club style, featuring hearty pork ribs and top-grade, juicy steaks. 1141 S. Mount Vernon Ave., Colton, (909) 370-3424. \$\$

CORONA

Backwoods BBQ

An authentic mesquite smoked Texas-style BBQ restaurant. Catering, entertainment and games can be found in this family facility. 4300 Green River Rd., Ste. 102, Corona, (951) 371-7227. \$