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## THE GREAT AMERICAN CRAFT FAIR

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## FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



A surf and turf burger comes topped with blackened crawfish tail and sliced avocado. PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

## Well padded

The satellite location of Tahoe City's Fat Cat Bar & Grill has recently joined the burgeoning midtown scene. The menu of elevated bar and grill fare sounded promising, so I rounded up some friends to check it out. Bottles of housemade ketchup—a mixture of tomato paste, honey, white balsamic vinegar, worcestershire, salt, black pepper and paprika—are prominently displayed. It's noticeably less sweet than the commercial variety, pleasantly rich in flavor with rustic texture—an interesting first impression.

As we'd arrived during happy hour, when there's a 30 percent discount on appetizers, we got to it with an order of Buffalo blue cheese fries (\$8.70) featuring shoestring potatoes, Buffalo wing sauce and crumbled blue cheese; pot stickers (\$12.90) with soy-ginger dipping sauce; Buffalo mac 'n' cheese balls (\$13.90) made with spicy chicken and mac 'n' cheese deep-fried in breadcrumbs and served with sriracha ranch; an ahi tower (\$17.90) of sesame marinated raw tuna topped with avocado, wonton chips and wasabi cream; and a Fat Cat frank (\$6.90), a.k.a. a Nathan's Famous 10-inch dog on a stick, crisped in housemade corn batter and served with honey dijon mustard.

The corn dog was impressive, the coating crunchy—not oily—with good flavor. The pasta cheese balls were just as crunchy, with a smooth, creamy interior and just a hint of heat. Bites of the tuna/avocado stack were great piled onto crispy chips, with a dash of mildly spicy sauce. The steamed potstickers weren't "golden brown" as advertised, but they nonetheless possessed great flavor in both the pork seasoning and sauce. Though the ample serving of sauce-coated fries were quite crispy and topped with plenty of cheese, they were served absolutely stone cold. Our server apologized, and delivered a replacement order that was just barely warm. I'm

guessing a bottle of refrigerated sauce was employed, and have to admit surprise that the error was repeated.

A Tahoe harvest salad (\$10.90) of organic baby greens, grape tomato, carrot, dried cranberry, candied walnut, blue cheese and balsamic vinaigrette met the description. My friend was quite taken with her grilled brie, chopped walnut and preserved fig sandwich on grilled sourdough (\$10.90). I felt the sweet jam overpowered the dish, and the sandwich was a bit thin for the price. Still, it was actually served hot.

The central focus of the menu is locally sourced, half-pound, grass-fed beef burgers served a la carte, stacked with butter lettuce, tomato and red onion on a fresh, locally baked bun (or a pair of glazed doughnuts). Alternatives include ahi, lamb and the vegetarian "Beyond" burger. Beef burgers are ordered "red/pink/no pink." We went with three ordered pink—expecting medium rare—and disappointedly received all three done to medium-well.

A straightforward hickory burger (\$13.90) included sweet-smoky barbecue sauce, bacon, cheddar and a battered onion ring. My Ridge burger (\$13.90) of sauteed onion, Swiss cheese and bacon beer jam was pretty tasty, despite the overcooked premium meat. The "jam" was house ketchup loaded with chunks of applewood-smoked bacon, delicious but a bit messy. Best overall was a surf and turf burger (\$17.90) topped with blackened crawfish tail and sliced avocado. Despite the overcooked beef, it was truly delicious.

Service was solid, and my happy hour 24-ounce draft PBR with a healthy pour of bourbon (\$9 total) helped me forget the freakishly chilled fries. □

## Fat Cat Bar & Grill

1401 S. Virginia St., 453-2223

Fat Cat Bar & Grill is open Sunday to Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Learn more at [renofatcat.com](http://renofatcat.com).