

Par's Place food rib-stickin' good

REVIEW

Restaurant's variety impressive; beware of the hot sauce

By JULIANN WETZ
For the Pulse-Journal

We wandered into Par's Place on a cold Wednesday evening and immediately felt warm and relaxed.

The cozy neighborhood gathering place was filled with an eclectic group of regulars who stopped in for a Happy Hour Dollar Draft after work. The bar was crowded, HD televisions sported a host of entertainment and classic rock played at a nice, moderate level. We felt very at ease.

This is exactly the result that Perry and Ingrid Brandt had in mind when they opened Par's Place in 1995. As a child, Perry was very active in sports and dreamed of one day owning a sports bar. He was a bartender during college in Columbus and later helped his brother, who owned Arnie's in Fairfield.

His experience shines through and the result is fantastic. Perry and Ingrid have created a unique establishment that strives to please its customers.

"We're not afraid to try new things," Brandt said. "We try not to be typical."

The walls are plastered with sports posters and beer insignia. Dark green chairs are crowded

around short and tall tables. Video games dot the corners of the room, and a long, busy bar sits off to the side, offering nine different drafts and 40 different bottle beers.

Though more of a bar than a restaurant, their slogan reads, "Par's Place . . . Where the food is up to Par."

Their signature dishes are their ribs and wings. They offer slow-cooked, smoked ribs with a variety of signature sauces: classic BBQ, hot and spicy, gold (a blend of molasses and mustard), jamaican jerk, garlic, blackened, mesquite, teriyaki and honey bourbon. You can order a full slab, half slab, or third of a slab, or you can do what we did and order "The Best of Par's": A of ribs, five wings and buffalo chips with your choice of sauces.

We mixed it up a bit to see whether there was a discernible difference among sauces. There was. The honey bourbon Sauce was sweet and smoky, distinctly different from the classic BBQ, which was tangy and thick. The two rib choices tasted nothing like each other except that the meat was falling off the bone on each. The texture was perfect and the third of a slab was more filling than you'd think.

We also varied the degree of heat on our wings. I ordered 3 Alarm, which is described as hot, while my friend ordered 5 Alarm, labeled "Dragon's Breath," and only outthemed by the 6 Alarm Sauce — Par's Insanity sauce.

How to go:

- **Where:** Par's Place
6 126 Winton Road,
Fairfield.
- **Call:** 829-3773
- **Hours:** Monday through Thursday from 2 p.m. to 1 a.m.; Friday and Saturday from noon to 2:30 a.m.; Sunday from noon to 11 p.m.

My hot wings were hot. I desperately needed the ranch dressing to cool down my tongue. But the 5 Alarm sauce was like fire. It was so hot that even a small bite created a sensation of singed tongue, lips and nose.

My friend instantly broke into a sweat and finished his drink before chomping into his second wing. We learned a valuable lesson, too, for anyone ordering this fantastic plate: eat the ribs first, because you won't be able to taste much of anything else after you eat the wings.

The dish was also served with a huge smattering of buffalo chips, seasoned potato chip-shaped fries that were wonderfully tasty.

On the lighter side, one member of our party ordered a bowl of the Seafood Gumbo. It rated as high as any in Louisiana. A combination of tomatoes, green and red pepper, okra, onion and celery, it was filled with rice and shrimp. The Creole flavor was subtle, but entirely present. It was a nice starter to his "Build-Your-Own" deli sandwich. Here

you choose three meats, a cheese and your choice of bread, served either hot or cold with potato chips.

None had room for dessert, though the choices were tempting: Xangos, a deep-fried smooth cheesecake in a flaky tortilla pastry, or a Reese's Peanut Butter Bar, peanut butter mousse with a graham cracker base and Reese's Peanut Butter Chips. Unusual finds in a bar setting.

New things are coming to Par's. They are currently updating the cozy interior and are making changes to the extensive menu that includes an assortment of unusual appetizers such as pot stickers, toasted ravioli and sauerkraut balls. The regular menu lists an array of items as salads, soups, grilled chicken sandwiches, reubens, burgers and subs.

The restaurant is situated across from Fairfield Community Golf Course.

Brandt credits their continued success with the loyalty of their customers, the proximity to golf, wonderful employees and their location in one of Fairfield's very solid neighborhoods.

Par's Place is a fun, friendly environment that also offers Karaoke on Friday nights and the occasional live entertainment. The combination of great food and drinks along with reasonable prices and their dedication to pleasing their customers make Par's Place "A Cool Place to Be."

Definitely up to Par.