

Wendi's Weekend Trips & Whatnot Food Guide: The Burger Edition



By Wendi and Bobby Warren

A Word From Wendi Warren

When Bobby and I decided to take an impromptu trip to East Amherst, New York to visit Grover's Bar and Grill, we had no idea what would come from it. That trip, which included a visit to Niagara Falls and Jamestown, NY, would lead me to start my blog Wendi's Weekend Trips and Whatnot. The result of creating the blog is the visits to many new restaurants. Some of those are highlighted in this short book.

As the title makes clear, the focus of the chapters here is around the different hamburgers we have tried. I love the sandwich that is known as the hamburger. The beef patty nestled between a bun with a variety of toppings has been the center of many of my meals. I have enjoy getting the chance to try them at top rated restaurants and what some might consider hole in the wall burger joints. I hope you enjoy this sampling, too.

Thank you! Wendi Warren

Grover's Bar & Grill: East Amherst, N.Y.



One of my favorites was our trip to New York State. We went to Niagara Falls, to Chautauqua Lake, [Jamestown](#) and East Amherst (not in that order).

We watched an episode of Diner's, Drive Ins and Dives about [Grover's Bar and Grill](#) in East Amherst, New York. It was Guy Fieri visit to Grover's and their burgers that even got me thinking about taking the trip. We left late on Thursday and returned late Saturday. It was a fast, 47 hour, fun filled trip that I won't soon forget. Except I realized I forgot to write about Grover's! So on this last three day weekend of summer, here is my recap of our time at Grover's.

We arrived at Grover's around 12:30. The place was packed. Seeing as we had never been there before, we had no idea about anything. So we walked in and didn't know what to do. The wait staff was pretty busy, so we wandered to the back of the restaurant and found a table right near the kitchen. During our stay there, I noticed that people came in, walked up to a beam in the middle of the building and wrote on the wall. I assumed it must be a chalkboard because the wait staff would go to the board, call out a name and use an eraser on the board. Apparently no one had been waiting before Bobby and I came in or else we might have gotten kicked out for taking their seats!

Grover's Bar & Grill: East Amherst, N.Y.



I ordered a burger, of course. It was this really huge burger with tons of cheese, bacon and mushrooms. Bobby ordered a sandwich with chicken tenders, pepper jack cheese and jalapenos. We shared a basket of fries.

Grover's Bar & Grill: East Amherst, N.Y.



We also shared a cup of the cheeseburger soup. We had to try it because it was highlighted on the show. My burger was pretty good, but I did have to add a little salt and pepper to it. Bobby seemed to enjoy his sandwich, too. The soup was great. It was nice and cheesy and hit the spot after the almost 2 hour trip in the car from Jamestown, New York. Because Bobby and I don't like onions, we were pleased that the ones in the soup were large enough to see and could be picked out.

Grover's Bar & Grill: East Amherst, N.Y.



Bobby does regret not ordering the wings. He said we had gone that far, he should have tried them. Had I known he wanted them, I would have insisted. Yet since he didn't get them, that basically means that there has to be another trip to New York in our future!

Heck's Cafe-Restaurant: Avon, Ohio

Saturday, August 22, 2015 was the day that my sister, Randi, and I did the obstacle/zip line course at the Go Ape Treetop Adventure in Strongsville, Ohio. (You can read more about that and watch videos [here](#).) It was also the day that we rewarded ourselves for our efforts at Heck's Cafe in Avon, Ohio. When I say it was a reward, I mean it!



For background, Bobby and I found out about Heck's Cafe through our newest favorite Food Network show, [Burgers, Brews and 'Que](#), hosted by Michael Symon. He highlighted the one in Cleveland, but we found out that there was also one in Avon. Since neither Bobby nor I enjoy driving into Cleveland and the fact that Avon is very close to State Route 83 (which also runs through Lodi and Wooster), we opted for the Avon location.

Heck's Cafe-Restaurant: Avon, Ohio

Michael Symon highlighted the Market Burger on the show, which is the burger Bobby chose. Although, if truth be told, he could have ended up with the chicken tacos, as he asked the waitress to “surprise” him. He gave her two choices: the Market Burger or the chicken tacos. She brought him the burger because it is her favorite item on the menu.



Randi got the Burger Au Cheval. This burger has bacon, cheddar cheese, sour cream and fried egg on it. Randi has studied French, so she was able to translate the name of the burger. If you want to know what it is, let me know in the comments below.

Heck's Cafe-Restaurant: Avon, Ohio



I thoroughly enjoyed the Rocky River Burger. This burger is piled high with mushrooms, bacon, swiss cheese and sour cream. Honestly, I have never thought to put sour cream on a burger. It is surprisingly refreshing. I didn't even ask for a side of Miracle Whip, which happens to be one of my four basic food groups, so this was a remarkable feat.

Heck's Cafe-Restaurant: Avon, Ohio



The sandwich comes with a side of fresh cut fries, which are my absolute favorite kind of fries. Bobby gave me his because mine were a little too brown for me. He likes things a little more toasty than me. Partly because we had expended so much energy at the Go Ape course and partly because it was on the menu, we ordered milkshakes, too.

Randi got a chocolate peanut butter shake. Bobby got a salted caramel shake (pictured below). I got a chocolate shake. (Yes, Dad, I know there are more flavors than chocolate.) While the taste of the shakes were very good, Bobby and I agreed that we like our shakes a little thicker. The presentation was great.

Heck's Cafe-Restaurant: Avon, Ohio



The most exciting menu item — and really the main purpose for me wanting to go to Heck's — was their Sweet Burger. This “burger” is made up of two chocolate chip cookies (they serve as the bun), a brownie (the meat) and a scoop of vanilla ice cream (which I assume would be the cheese). It also comes with “fries,” which are strips of funnel cake and berry “ketchup.” This dessert was *sooooo* good. Bobby and I cut it in half to share. We also ordered the flourless chocolate torte to share. I ended up bringing a little bit of everything home, except, of course the shake and ice cream.

Heck's Cafe-Restaurant: Avon, Ohio

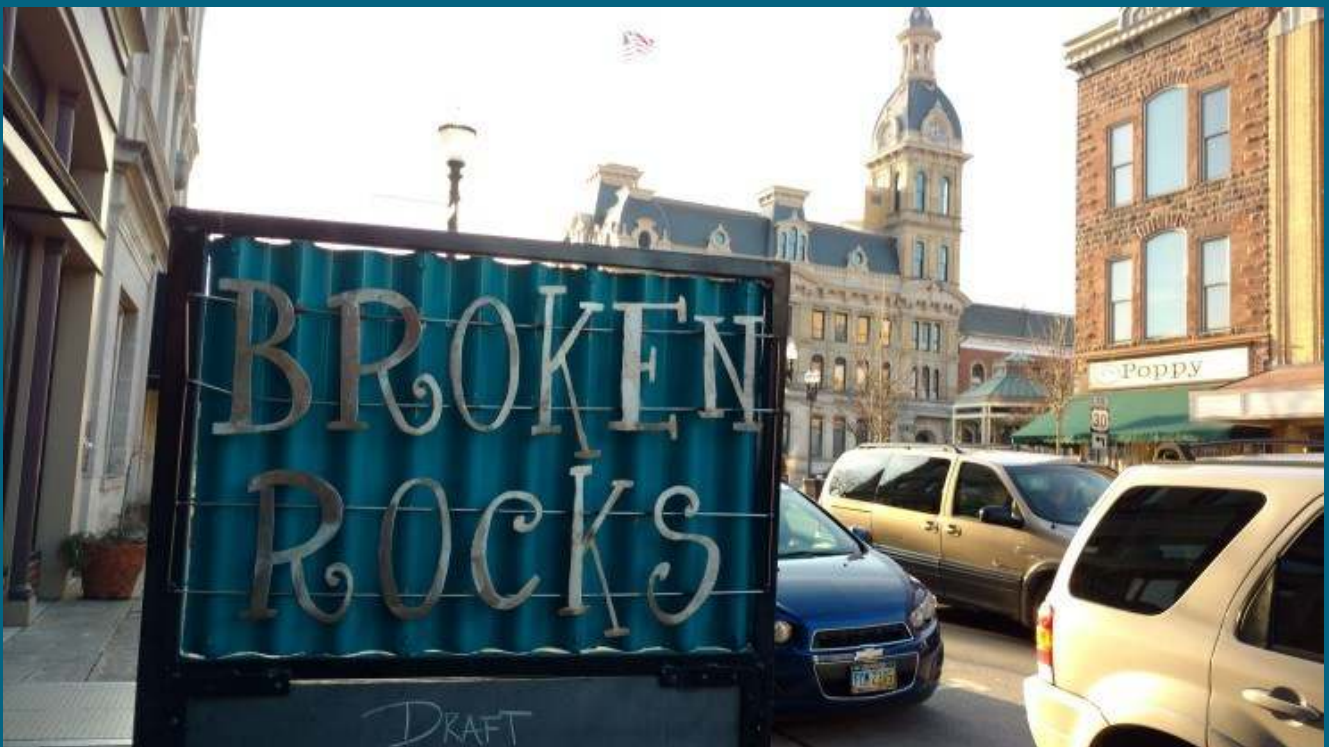


While we were eating our dessert, Amber, the manager, came by to check on the table, like all good managers do. Bobby stopped her and told her how impressed we were with everything. Bobby suggested Heck's create a dessert with just the funnel cake fries, perhaps add chocolate and caramel sauces and something crumbled to make a take-off of chili cheese fries (that's why I love that guy, he's always thinking). Amber shared that Heck's food is made from scratch, from locally sourced vendors. The meat is all local from grass-fed cows. She encouraged us to go to Heck's in Cleveland and also check out West Side Market. As a native Clevelander, she said go on Monday, as the weekends are crazy.

Whether I go to the Heck's in Cleveland or return to the one in Avon, one thing is sure, I will be returning. Frankly, it is worth the journey.

In a Word, Rox Gastropub in Wooster Rocks

My wife, Wendi, and I love to watch Guy Fieri's "Diners, Drive-ins & Dives" and Michael Symon's "Burgers, Brews & 'Cue" on the Food Network. It was while watching one of these shows where we learned of the term "gastropub," which generally refers to a pub that serves quality food. The owners of Broken Rocks Cafe & Bakery brought that style of eatery and pub to Wooster, and we are better for it.



Wendi and I decided to try out the Rox Gastropub with her sister, Randi Breese, and her husband, Shaun Vahl. While the pub has its own entrance off Liberty Street, it is not well-marked. So, we came in through Broken Rocks, and when you cross into the pub it is like you are transported to a different place and time. Broken Rocks is big and open; Rox Gastropub is small and intimate. It features a lot of tables for two; we had to wait for two of these tables to be joined together. It also has a full bar.

In a Word, Rox Gastropub in Wooster Rocks



In trying to find the origins of the gastropub, Wikipedia says the term was coined in 1991 in London. Pubs were more drinking establishments than eateries, until Mike Belbin and David Eyre of The Eagle changed that and served high-end food to compliment the high-quality beer. Because Wendi and I do not drink, we cannot speak to the quality of the libations, though Shaun did enjoy his JAFB draft selection. These gastropubs feature wood-scrubbed floors, menu selections on a blackboard and an open kitchen, and the Rox Gastropub had all three.

In a Word, Rox Gastropub in Wooster Rocks



Shaun ordered a beet salad, which he said was “really good, if you like beets.” Randi ordered a side salad. And, they shared a cheese pizza. Everything is basically cooked in a hot, open “masonry” oven. (In my day, these were called brick ovens.)



In a Word, Rox Gastropub in Wooster Rocks

There is a very small “steam table” in the back of the kitchen to keep some items warm, but basically everything goes into pans and is cooked in the high heat of the oven. Because of this, it causes charring on the pizzas, which is a good thing. Most people accustomed to franchise-style pizzas cooked in pans on conveyor-belt ovens might be taken aback by this kind of pizza, but this is how pizzas should be made.



Randi and Shaun shared a slice of the pizza with me (the charred piece), and it was really good. The sauce had a nice flavor to it: A little sweet, a little tangy. I was surprised the crust was so soft. Normally, because the pizza is being cooked on stone at a high temperature, the crust becomes crisp (the way I like it), but this crust remained soft and chewy. I would definitely recommend it. I am a cheese pizza kind of guy, none of the fancy stuff for me.

In a Word, Rox Gastropub in Wooster Rocks

Wendi and I shared the Pub Burger, which featured a local Waygu ground beef, bacon lardons, caramelized onions, sauteed mushrooms and white cheddar. Neither of us are fans of onions, so we nixed them, and Wendi got the mushrooms on the side. This was a very tasty burger. I had purchased some Waygu beef (similar to the beef from the Kobe region of Japan) at Buehler's, but I did not make a burger this good at home. It was very tasty, and I enjoyed it. The burger was also served with jojo potatoes. They were oven-roasted and not deep fried, but they were still good.



The menu also features a steak sandwich, a duck Udon noodle bowl (see below) and a banh mi sandwich.

In a Word, Rox Gastropub in Wooster Rocks



We will definitely have to go back and look at the menu better and enjoy another great meal with friends and family. The Rox Gastropub rocks.

Canton's Table 6 Kitchen + Bar = 10

Wendi and I headed to the Canton area for the day. We wanted to take a tour of the Harry London Chocolate factory, visit the National First Ladies Museum and get a bite to eat at someplace that was not a chain and something different than what we can get in Wooster. We discovered Table 6 Kitchen + Bar.



We learned about the restaurant from the [Visit Canton website](#). While we live in Wooster, it is not like we are totally unfamiliar with Canton-area establishments. I thought Table 6 must have been a new restaurant. I never heard a word about the place. I was surprised to learn it has been around since 2013.

Canton's Table 6 Kitchen + Bar = 10



We popped in around 11:15 a.m. for an early lunch, figuring we would tackle the other two items on our agenda later (we only made it to the chocolate factory). We were one of the first ones there. When we walked inside, I was struck by how spacious the restaurant and bar was. When I worked for Valle's Steak House in Daytona Beach, Fla., in the 1980s, we easily sat 900 people on both sides of the house (one side was all booths, the other all tables). But the trend since the '80s has been to build smaller eateries.

Canton's Table 6 Kitchen + Bar = 10



The bar area was quite spacious, too, but because we don't drink, it really wasn't a space that caught our attention.



Canton's Table 6 Kitchen + Bar = 10

Our waitress was Brittany, and she was extremely friendly and attentive. She took some time to tell us about the place and the menu. She recommended the chicken and waffles, which is their specialty. We started our lunch off with Lobster Mac + Cheese for Wendi, and Brothers Fried Pickles for me. Wendi described her dish as cheesy (not dry), and the lobster was good. She would have liked a little more lobster meat in the dish, but she still enjoyed it.



The Brothers Fried Pickles were of the chip variety and not the spear variety. The menu said it came with a horsey aioli, but all I could taste was lemon. I ordered a side of ranch dressing to go with the pickles, and I preferred it. I am not a seafood eater, so I didn't try the mac and cheese, but Wendi and I both took home half of our appetizers.

Canton's Table 6 Kitchen + Bar = 10



I never really ate chicken and waffles together (I did order them at IHOP once and ate them separately). When the order was served, I asked Brittany if I eat them together, and she instructed me to pour the Bourbon-maple syrup all over it and eat it. The meal came with four large sections of boneless chicken breast, and the waffle was creamy inside. All of the waffles I have had tended to just be crispy and dry throughout. Not this one. It was creamy in the middle, and it reminded me a little of Yorkshire pudding. This was pretty good. Wendi appreciated the chicken was flavorful and moist. She also said eating the two together was interesting. We each ate one section and took half of the meal home with us.

Canton's Table 6 Kitchen + Bar = 10



Wendi and I also shared the Buckeye Burger, which came with cheddar cheese, bacon, fried onion straws and sriracha ketchup (which we had them put on the side). The burger was extremely tasty and juicy. (I like City Square Steakhouse's burgers in Wooster a little better, but this was really close.) We ate all of it, and I really enjoyed the fresh-cut fries. I liked them a little better than Wendi because they were fried crispy.

Canton's Table 6 Kitchen + Bar = 10



Overall, Wendi and I had a great time at Table 6 Kitchen + Bar. We would definitely make a special trip to Canton just to eat at the restaurant.

As for our trip to the chocolate factory, you can read Wendi's post about it [here](#).



The Thurman Cafe, A German Village Gem

When my husband, Bobby, and I went to Columbus on Saturday, March 19, 2016, I had only planned to attend a show at The Little Theatre Off Broadway in Grove City. Bobby had more in mind than that. He had been wanting to try [The Thurman Cafe](#) for some time. It wasn't until recently that it was even on my radar.



I had no preconceived idea of where we were going. Bobby had talked about the “Thurmanator,” this truly gargantuan burger they serve. It consists of two 12 ounce burgers, bacon, sauteed mushrooms, onions, ham, banana peppers, tomato, lettuce, cheddar, mozzarella and American cheese served on a bun with fries and pickle spear. We did not order that, but I definitely understand how this can be the reason why someone would come to the restaurant. When we arrived it was right around 5:00. We walked in and the place was already crowded!

The Thurman Cafe, A German Village Gem



Sean prepares to tackle The Thurmanator at The Thurman Cafe in Columbus, Ohio.

The Thurman Cafe, A German Village Gem

We gave our name and requested a table. (We prefer tables to booths.) The host said that it would be around 45 minutes for a table. We were alright with that as the show did not start until 8 p.m. We found a seat by their juke box and started to check out the menu. It wasn't more than 5 minutes — if that — when he came up to us and asked if we would mind sitting at the bar. We thought it was a golden opportunity to get served quicker, so we took him up on it.



I will let you know that Thurman's waiting area is almost as big as the cafe itself. In fact, we found out later that they had added the waiting area to the restaurant around 8 years ago. I tried to imagine how people maneuvered in the restaurant before that happened. The servers had to negotiate a packed room the day we were there. They tell you up front (in their menu) that everyone working can help with whatever you need. There isn't an assigned waiter or waitress to a table. This would help make sure everyone had what they needed as soon as they needed it.

The Thurman Cafe, A German Village Gem



Sitting at the bar, allowed us to have an opportunity to have quick little conversations with servers behind the bar. We talked with Victor and Kevin and then a couple of other servers (I'm sorry, but I didn't catch their names). We found out that the dollars are posted on the wall until there is no more room. Then they are taken down and donated to charity. Bobby, of course, said I should put one up with my website on it. (Who knows where that dollar will travel!) We also discovered that working at The Thurman Cafe must be a great gig. I say that because Victor has worked there for 27 years and Kevin for 30 years. You don't do that if it isn't a good place to work.

The Thurman Cafe, A German Village Gem



So how was the food? It was delicious! We started out with an basket of loaded fries with cheese and bacon. These fries were really thick fresh cut fries. They were smothered with cheese and bacon. We asked for ranch dressing to dip them in. And if that was all we had gotten, we would have been plenty full.



The Thurman Cafe, A German Village Gem

But we didn't stop there! We decided to split a burger and a thin crust cheese pizza. The burger we ordered was "The Big TC" which is 3/4 pound burger with special sauce, lettuce, American cheese, pickle on Texas toast.



They bill their thin pizza crust as "thinner than thin." Which is right up Bobby's alley. (He comes from the East Coast and likes thin crust pizza.) Needless to say, we ended up taking home half the burger (which we had them cut in half and then we shared just one half between us) and some of the pizza. Bobby shared a some of the pizza with the couple sitting next to him. They had wanted to try it. They were going to refuse, but have you ever tried to refuse Bobby when he was offering you something? Pretty impossible – he is Italian!

The Thurman Cafe, A German Village Gem



Like I have said in a previous post, the trip to Columbus was one of our “perfect” dates. You’ll have to try The Thurman Cafe to see for yourself. Just make sure you take your appetite — oh yeah, and a dollar to put up on their wall.



Wendy adds a dollar to the thousands hanging around The Thurman Cafe.

What Do You Do After a 3-Ring Circus? Head to 3 Brothers

After a recent visit to see the [Tadmor Shrine Circus](#) in Canton, Ohio, we were feeling a little hungry. We wanted to find a place to eat that is not in Wooster, where we live. After such a wonderful experience at [Table 6 Kitchen + Bar](#), we thought why not try one of its sister restaurants. So, we settled on [3 Brothers Corner Tavern](#).



Wendi and I were joined by her co-worker, Jessica, and Jessica's little cousin, Vance. We thought we would start the meal off with an appetizer, so we settled on the Player's Pizza Dip. It featured pepperoni in a marinara sauce with melted mozzarella cheese and cream cheese. I was surprised that the dish came with tortilla chips to dip into the bubbly concoction. It didn't take away too much from the appetizer, it was good, but foccacia slices or garlic breadsticks would seem like a more fitting complement.

What Do You Do After a 3-Ring Circus? Head to 3 Brothers



A bubbly concoction of pepperoni, mozzarella and cream cheese in a marinara sauce with tortilla chips for dipping.

Jessica ordered the Smothers Brother Burger. 3 Brothers Corner Tavern features decent-sized burgers. I think they are about six-eight ounces, a pub-sized burger. After biting into it, she said, "It's incredible."

What Do You Do After a 3-Ring Circus? Head to 3 Brothers



The Smothers Brother Burger with Swiss cheese and mushrooms

Wendi ordered the Three-Peat Burger, which featured three slices of honey bacon and choice of cheese. Wendi liked the burger. Where Jessica went with the french fries, Wendi opted for the tater tots. She really liked the tots with her burger.



What Do You Do After a 3-Ring Circus? Head to 3 Brothers

Three strips of honey bacon and choice of cheese on the Three-Peat Burger
Vance said he wasn't hungry; he mainly nibbled on the tortilla chips and pizza dip. Me, well, I was the only one to order a dinner. I ordered the Blackened Chicken Mac & Cheese from the Corner Favorites section of the menu. It featured a juicy, tender chicken breast with blackened seasoning, layered on top of creamy macaroni and cheese with cherry tomato halves, scallions and a breadstick. I wasn't expecting the tomatoes, and they were a nice addition. At a restaurant where I worked in Florida, we served mac and cheese with stewed tomatoes. I really liked this dish. My only complaint is the blackened seasoning is not as hot as what I use at home. But, I did finish it, so that tells you something.



We learned that Sunday is Fun Day at 3 Brothers Corner Tavern. Because I ordered from the Corner Favorites section of the menu, I also received a free slice of pie. The waitress informed us she only had one slice of chocolate cream pie left, so I asked her set it aside because that was the one I wanted. We were all pretty full from our meals, so we all shared the slice of pie. It was a nice ending to a good meal. It was chocolatey, just the way Wendi likes it. It was good.

What Do You Do After a 3-Ring Circus? Head to 3 Brothers



While the place is a “tavern,” it had more of a restaurant feel to us. We were there late on a Sunday night, so it wasn’t packed and there were not a lot of people at the bar. We had no problem taking Vance into the establishment. Wendi and I would definitely recommend the place if you are in the Canton area.

Nadine's: Small Space, Huge Tastes in Pittsburgh

When my husband, Bobby, suggested we go to Pittsburgh for the day on Saturday, April 23, 2016, one of the first things we did was search [Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives](#). That is our style. We want to check out area restaurants that Guy Fieri has already been to. (We also like to see where Michael Symon goes. His show is [Burgers, Brew and 'Que](#).) For our trip to Pittsburgh, we had five options to choose from. We decided that we would at least have to try [Nadine's Bar and Restaurant](#) which is on the Southside of Pittsburgh.



On the show, Guy Fieri parks outside of Nadine's and comments about how small it is. He was not kidding. In fact, the video makes the restaurant look bigger than it did in real life! I had second thoughts about trying it once we were there. But then again, we have never been disappointed when following Guy's suggestions, so we forged ahead.

Nadine's: Small Space, Huge Tastes in Pittsburgh



Penguin Game Captures Everyone's Attention

My first impression of the inside is that we had walked into a bar/restaurant that is a local hangout. The Pittsburgh Penguins were on all the television screens playing in a NHL playoff game against the New York Rangers. The bar and one corner of the restaurant was crowded with people intently watching the game. The narrow space between bar and the wall had a couple of high top tables, but Bobby decided we should sit at the bar so we could talk with the bartenders/cooks. At Nadine's everything is right there, behind the bar.

Nadine's: Small Space, Huge Tastes in Pittsburgh



The legendary oven with string that holds it shut.

Since we had been driving around Pittsburgh for a while without any pit stops (if you know what I mean), Bobby had to use the facilities right away. So that left me to order drinks. We typically only drink water, one because it is better for us and two because it is cheap, so that is what I ordered. The bartender, whom I later learned was Earl, said, "Water?! We don't make any money off of water." I was taken aback, but then realized he was mostly kidding. He brought us water and then went about his business cutting up green peppers (presumably for the fried bologna sandwiches on the menu).

Nadine's: Small Space, Huge Tastes in Pittsburgh



Earl cutting up peppers.

We placed our order, Bobby got the meatball hoagie and fries. I ordered the hot roast beef sandwich with mashed potatoes. Both were dishes that we saw on the video from the Diners, Drive-ins and Dives show. The food was phenomenal. Bobby loved the meatball sub. It had two huge meatballs on it. The bread was a substantial roll and the sauce was a little tangy for Bobby's taste. It was a large and filling sandwich—which Bobby had to cut and eat a little at a time, instead of holding the whole sandwich in his hands. The fresh cut fries (my favorite) were yummy. (Yes, Bobby let me have some.)

Nadine's: Small Space, Huge Tastes in Pittsburgh



Bobby's Meatball Hoagie

My meal was huge. Earl cut two huge slices of bread from what appeared to be fresh baked and added a large layer of hot roast beef to one slice and then added the second slice of bread. Then he smothered the sandwich and the scoop of real mashed potatoes with this rich, deep color brown gravy. I think the mashed potatoes were red potatoes because the skins were part of the potatoes.

Nadine's: Small Space, Huge Tastes in Pittsburgh



My hot roast beef sandwich.

As we ate, I watched Earl go from cooking food, to serving drinks, to cutting up the potatoes for the fries, to cleaning dishes. He and his co-worker, (which I didn't catch his name), worked behind the bar tending to all the needs of their customers. I enjoyed listening to some of the banter between Earl and customers. He stopped a couple of times to talk with us. We told him that we had seen the restaurant on the show, which he said he figured since he hadn't seen us before. He also let us sign their "guest book" which was one of three that they started since being on the show 8 years ago. He also told us that the show was actually scoping out another local establishment, but the bartender there said she only cooked one burger a week. Then she suggested that they check out Nadine's. Someone from the show checked out the restaurant for a few days, liked what they saw and called Nadine. She thought it was a joke and hung up on them several times. Finally the producer said, "This isn't a joke. Here is our number. If you are interested, call us back." She did and the rest is history.

Nadine's: Small Space, Huge Tastes in Pittsburgh



Triple D T-shirt

Ironically, we again discovered that we can actually never get far away from home. We were sitting there telling Earl we were from Ohio, near Akron. The guy sitting next to me asked, where we were from. I said Wooster. He said, "I graduated from the College of Wooster." It truly is a small world!

If you get a chance to go to Pittsburgh, I would highly suggest a trip to Nadine's. It isn't fancy and it really is quite small, but the food is great, the atmosphere is colorful and the bartenders, at least Earl, are down to earth and mostly friendly.

Steak 'n Shake Raises Stakes in Burger Game

It seems I have always been generally aware of [Steak 'n Shake](#), and I know a lot of people who like the restaurant. The couple of times I ate there, I was never really impressed. It was years ago before chefs raised the level of burgers to an art form. However, a friend of mine, Frank Yost, loves the place and posts photos on Facebook whenever he eats there or stops in for a happy hour milkshake. With that in mind, I asked Wendi if she wanted to stop there for lunch on our way to Columbus. We visited the one off I-71 in Mansfield.



Because Steak 'n Shake is an upgrade to the standard fast-food fare, Wendi wanted to sit down and enjoy the burgers rather than trying to eat while rolling down the highway (we were going to see our great-nephews at their school for Special Person Day, which Wendi will write about in an upcoming blog post). We headed inside, and the place was packed. Rather than waiting for a table to open up, we sat down at the counter, similar to what we did at [The Thurman Cafe](#).

Steak 'n Shake Raises Stakes in Burger Game



Like Wendi is wont to do, she gravitated to a burger with an egg on it, the Steak 'n Shake specialty burger: The Royale Steakburger. Here is the menu description: A Double Steakburger with melted American cheese, applewood smoke bacon, lettuce, vine-ripened tomato, and mayo. All topped by a delicious fried egg. Neither one of us was going to leave the restaurant without one of its famous shakes. She settled on the Double Fudge Chocolate shake.

Steak 'n Shake Raises Stakes in Burger Game



Wendi said she wanted an egg on her burger because I got bacon. My choice was the Bacon 'n Cheese Double Steakburger with fries. My shake of choice was the Salted Caramel Pretzel shake.

Steak 'n Shake Raises Stakes in Burger Game



We both really liked the burgers. With the fries and shake, the meal was filling. After lunch, I began wondering why I didn't originally have a higher opinion of the eatery. It was a good, classic burger. Nothing fancy, but tasty and juicy. It reminded me of Bob's Burgers in Akron. We were introduced to Bob's Burgers at the [National Hamburger Festival](#) in Akron. I am not a fan of smashing a burger, but that is exactly how Steak 'n Shake cooks its steakburgers on a grill. They start out looking like small hockey pucks of beef. As they cook, a worker uses two spatulas to smash the burgers.

Steak 'n Shake Raises Stakes in Burger Game



I asked one of the workers what cuts of beef the restaurant uses, and she did not know. However, she did say the beef is 80 percent lean, 20 percent fat. In reading about the history of Steak 'n Shake, I discovered it was started in 1934 in Normal, Ill., and owner Gus Belt would wheel out a barrel of T-bone, round and sirloin steaks and grind the meat in front of diners. This was to show them the quality of the beef.

Steak 'n Shake Raises Stakes in Burger Game



When I asked Frank what he liked about Steak 'n Shake, he said, "Prices are great. The burgers are delicious (the first burger I got there was a triple on a pretzel bun with a pickle and some salt and pepper). And I love the salted caramel pretzel shake! And having a happy hour where the shakes are half price is awesome too!"

Steak 'n Shake Raises Stakes in Burger Game



There is no Steak 'n Shake near us in Wooster, Ohio, but we would definitely grab a bite there to eat again. We would suggest you doing the same.

Five Guys Gets Five Stars

I can't remember the first time I went to a Five Guys Burgers and Fries. I do remember that I thought it was great. The burgers were big, they make fresh cut fries and they give you plenty of them. So you can imagine my delight when I heard that a Five Guys was being built at the north end of Wooster. Waiting for it to be opened was a true test of my patience.



It was on Monday, May 30, that they officially opened. Bobby and I had been dog sitting in Lodi, but were heading home in the afternoon. We made arrangements to meet my sister, Randi, and brother-in-law, Shaun for a late lunch. Neither of them had ever been to a Five Guys Burgers and Fries. I will admit that I was a little nervous that we might have over sold the restaurant. Just because I love it, doesn't mean everyone will, too. But my fears were unfounded. Everything was great. In fact they have even added milkshakes! What can be better than a burger, fries and shake?

Five Guys Gets Five Stars



I got a bacon cheeseburger with basically the works, minus onions, and added grilled mushrooms. Bobby had a bacon cheeseburger with the works, without onions, too. (We hate onions.) We shared a large fry, remember that they fill the container and then throw a whole lot more into the bottom of the bag. Then, because they now serve shakes, I had to get one. I could have mixed it up with different flavors, but really I am a simple girl. I like chocolate shakes, so I stayed true to myself and got a chocolate shake. I really enjoyed it!

Five Guys Gets Five Stars



Randi got a shake, too, but opted for the Oreo Creme flavor. The cashier told her it was her favorite, so Randi gave it a try. She said it was good, too. If I ever branch away from my fav, I might add in Oreo Creme to chocolate. (I'm really that much of a chocoholic.)



Five Guys Gets Five Stars

Everything we had was great. The burgers were big and juicy. (Nice and messy, just like I like.) When you order a burger, unless you order a “Little Burger,” you are getting a burger with two all beef patties. We’re talking about a substantial burger, here. The fresh cut fries were perfect. The shake was a nice addition, too. The one thing that surprised me was the cost. However, after really analyzing it and considering the portion sizes, the cost wasn’t unreasonable-just a little more than I was expecting.



Randi and Shaun also enjoyed it. They said it reminded them of a place they would go in California when they lived there.

Five Guys Gets Five Stars



All in all, I am really glad Five Guys has come to Wooster. It's a step up from the other fast food restaurants, but casual enough to grab it to go. In my book, you can't go wrong with a burger and fresh cut fries. Heck, I might just stop in just for fries sometimes. That's what makes it so awesome that it is now in Wooster!

Experiencing Serendipity in New York City

In the movie *Serendipity*, Sara, the female lead said she liked the word *Serendipity* because it means “fortunate accident.” Dictionary.com gives one definition for the word as an “aptitude for making desirable discoveries by accident.” I think I like the dictionary’s definition better, because I almost think that is how things happen for Bobby, my husband, and me. We often find things by accident.



Well I guess I shouldn’t say that our trip to New York City was an accident, because we actually went there for of a conference I was speaking at for work. But by making it a combination work and pleasure trip, we accidentally made some fun discoveries. Some we had planned, but turned out better than we could have imagined. Others just sort of happened.

[Godiva Milk Chocolate Trufflelata](#)

Experiencing Serendipity in New York City

— When we arrived at our hotel (the Waldorf-Astoria), we had no idea where anything was. We only knew that we had tickets to a show near Times Square. So we head off in the direction of Times Square. Bobby wanted to find a pizza shop to get a slice of New York style pizza. We couldn't find the place, even with GPS. (Turns out it was in the lower level of Rockefeller Center.) While we were trying to figure out where to go, we stopped out front of a Godiva Chocolate store. One of the chocolatiers, Ana, was working on dipping strawberries into chocolate. Mesmerized by the chocolate, which I'm sure is no surprise, I had to watch. She pointed to a sign that showed it was still "Happy Hour." Which included a buy one, get one 50% off of their Truffelatas. This is a frozen drink made with Godiva truffles. Needless to say it was delicious with little chunks of truffles. While we were there, I asked a chocolatier if she knew where the pizza shop was that we were looking for. She directed us through a door and told us to take the stairs down to the lower level.



Tri Tip Grill

Experiencing Serendipity in New York City

– Something funny happened on the way to the pizza shop. After the help we received from our chocolatier at Godiva's, we found the pizza place Bobby had been looking for. However, it turned out to be more Sicilian style than the New York style he wanted. We were getting hungry and when we passed a restaurant that had this tremendous aroma of char-broiled meat, my stomach said to stop, so we did! The Tri Tip Grill serves Certified Angus Beef, which is Bobby's favorite brand of beef and happens to be based in Wooster, Ohio. We ordered a bacon cheddar burger and the tri tip platter with roasted vegetables. This food was terrific. The Tri Tip Platter was a substantial meal that included a variety of fire roasted vegetables as well as smashed potatoes. The burger was one of the best we've had—and we've had some really great burgers. We hadn't planned on eating here, but we were really glad we did.



Staten Island Ferry

Experiencing Serendipity in New York City

— My friend, Shannon Green, who is from New York City, told us that we could ride the ferry and get a decent view of the Statue of Liberty for free. (The ferry is free to ride.) So after Bobby and I visited the One World Observatory and Ground Zero Reflecting Pools, we took the subway to Whitehall Street to catch the ferry. We had no idea where to go on the ferry to see the statue, so when we started to get on the boat, with the hundreds of other people, we just kept climbing up. I figured if we could get to the top deck, we might be able to see something. Turns out they have much of it roped off at the very front — I figure for safety reasons — so we got as far forward and high as we could. We had tried to get seats on the starboard side (that's the right side as you face the front of the boat), but the seats were already taken. So we just moved on. We finally ended up on the port side of the boat (that is the left side as you face the front of the boat). Although there weren't any seats where we were, it turned out that was the best place to see the Statue of Liberty. (Plus it was much cooler there than anywhere inside the boat.)



Experiencing Serendipity in New York City

We had to disembark once we got to Staten Island. We were on a deadline to get somewhere later, so we just got back in line for the next ferry heading to Manhattan. On our way back, we decided to go to the lowest level we could—mostly because not many people were heading that way. We ended up where if they had been letting cars on, the cars would have been there. The bottom was all open and though we still didn't get to sit down and the very front of the boat was roped off, the view of the New York City skyline was amazing. Again, we had no idea what we were doing when we got onto the boat either time, but we had made desirable discoveries by accident—serendipity!



The Shake Shack

Experiencing Serendipity in New York City

– Due to the fact that understanding the Subway system in New York City takes more than a quick, cursory look at a subway map on the wall, we ended up getting off the subway earlier than we should have on our way back to the Waldorf Astoria. However, because we made this slight detour, we ended up at Madison Square Park, which is the home of the original Shake Shack. Bobby had heard about this place and I think we might have even saw something on TV about it, but it didn't click with me until we were standing in line waiting to place our order. While we were waiting, we were able to enjoy the music of Frank Sinatra sung by a street performer. He was pretty good. He had a sound system and microphone and accompaniment CDs playing the music. We ordered our burgers and fries and lemonade and waited, along with a whole host of other New Yorkers and tourists. And then it started to rain. While we didn't get to enjoy our meal at the tables or even when it was hot, the burgers were pretty good. But we wouldn't have even been there if it hadn't been by "accident."



Serendipity 3

Experiencing Serendipity in New York City

— As we were getting close to the end of our trip to New York City, we still had not been able to manage a trip to the restaurant Serendipity 3. This restaurant is featured in the movie, Serendipity and Bobby had wanted to make sure we got there (for my sake). It didn't appear like it was going to happen, but after Roni (from Midtown Manhattan Movie Tours) had dropped us off at our hotel on our last night in the city and we had a chance to sort of rest, Bobby insisted that we take a cab over to the place. Once there we got a frozen hot chocolate (which is the same drink they got in the movie) and also a "Can't Say No" Sundae. When we were finished we went outside and tried to figure out our best option for getting back to the Waldorf-Astoria. There is a bench outside of the restaurant, presumably for people who are waiting in line to be seated, but we sat down while Bobby was trying to figure which way we should walk to get a ride home. Neither one of us noticed a taxi pull up to the curb. I just "happened" to turn my head and there it was! I asked if he was accepting passengers and then we had a ride home.



Schnipper's: A New York Restaurant That is My Kind of Place

When my husband, Bobby and I traveled to New York City in July, we had the opportunity to try plenty of places to eat. Some we had planned to go-like Serendipity 3. We also had an idea of what we wanted to get in New York -- like New York style pizza, "real" bagels and something from a street vendor. (FYI regarding the street vendors, they cost too much -- or at least they do outside of the American Museum of Natural History.)



But most of the time, we were just going with the flow. We found some really good places and some that we are glad we tried, but don't have to go back. But when we stumbled upon Schnipper's, I found a place where I felt I could visit again and again.

First of all, it was a burger joint and not a deli. I'm not complaining, but it seems to me that delicatessens are in ample supply in New York City. Secondly, it was laid back. The servers behind the counter were friendly and helpful. They also didn't rush us. Sometimes we can take a little bit of time to order, but they didn't seem to mind. (Probably helped that we were there after the dinner rush.)

Schnipper's: A New York Restaurant That is My Kind of Place



But the best thing about it was it was just a good burger and fries. I got the Schnipper Burger, which is a double decker burger with cheese and bacon. Like I said, the burger was good. I like it when burgers are a little messy and this burger was just right.

Schnipper's: A New York Restaurant That is My Kind of Place



Bobby got chicken tenders. He said the chicken tenders (which were hand-breaded) reminded him of the chicken tenders that his mother, Carmen, used to make. It reminded him so much of her that he decided to place a call to her right then and there.

Schnipper's: A New York Restaurant That is My Kind of Place



We split an order of cheesy sloppy joe fries. I have never had sloppy joe's on fries before. That was an interesting way to serve them. I wouldn't want them every time, but it was a nice way to mix things up.



Schnipper's: A New York Restaurant That is My Kind of Place

In a previous post I wrote about serendipity. This restaurant would fall into that category. Neither of us planned to go there, but both of us were glad we did.



Everything we ordered cost less than one of our sandwiches at a famous New York deli. It was good fresh food for a good price in Midtown Manhattan. What's not to like about that?

Hamburgers Galore ... and More

I love burgers. Where Bobby could eat pizza seven days a week, I could eat burgers. I'm famous in my family for the way I construct my burgers. In fact, as a child I was usually the last one to get done eating when we had burgers. It took me that long to get everything just right. A burger had to have salad dressing (think generic Miracle Whip), ketchup, mustard, tomatoes and pickles. I hate onions, so there was no place on my burger for them; they just ruin them. (Don't hate me onion lovers!)



I say all that as a way to explain the eager anticipation I felt when Bobby and I were on our way to the 10th Annual National Hamburger Festival at [Lock 3 in Akron](#). While the festival itself was a two day event, that had everything from a festival queen pagant, to a burger eating contest, to a bobbing for burger event, Bobby and I were only able to on Saturday evening.

As we were purchasing our food tickets, we were developing a plan for how we would enjoy the festival. We decided that we would start with [Smoke, the Burger Joint](#). Bobby had wanted to try the burger from the restaurant, so this was a perfect opportunity. We planned on getting one burger and splitting it.

Hamburgers Galore ... and More



As we stood in line, Bobby decided we should try the Texas Triple Jay Burger. The burger is smoked over "real hickory wood". Next it is topped with smoked pickled jalapeno mayo, cheddar cheese, jalapeno bacon and fried jalapenos. If you like things hot and spicy, this is the burger for you. Bobby enjoys things that are spicy (he married me, didn't he?). I enjoy my food on the mild side. However, I don't know how many times Bobby has acquiesced and order things that were more mild than he would have liked, just for me. So on Saturday, I thought, "What the heck." Let's just say that I'm glad we had also purchased a large lemonade.

Hamburgers Galore ... and More



After we finished with the burger, which definitely opened up our sinuses, Bobby went in search of a more traditional burger. He left me on the lawn to watch the gorgeous sunset and listen to the music of Jimmy Buffet performed by [Changes in Latitude](#), a tribute band. When he returned he brought with him a burger from [Bob's Hamburg](#). The sign touted that Bob's Hamburg is the oldest restaurant in Akron. It has been around since 1931. All I know is that the burger was terrific!

Hamburgers Galore ... and More



The burger was the perfect traditional burger. It was two patties with tomato, lettuce, mayo and ketchup. It was just juicy and messy enough to be great. In fact it was so good, we were half way through it before we remembered we needed to take a picture for my blog!



Hamburgers Galore ... and More

Although we were only there for a couple of hours, it was a great end to a wonderful Saturday. I will be more prepared next year. I'll go earlier, stay later and bring a bigger appetite, because honestly, one can never have too many hamburgers.



These Burgers are Hot, No, Blazin'

Wendi and I were headed to Berlin, Ohio, in order to check into the [Berlin Grande Hotel](#) to enjoy some time away and celebrate 21 years of marriage. I had an idea: Find a nice burger place and surprise her for lunch. Wendi loves burgers; the messier the better. I settled on [Blazin' Burgers](#) in Strasburg. The intent was to go there on Friday, we ended up there on Saturday afternoon.



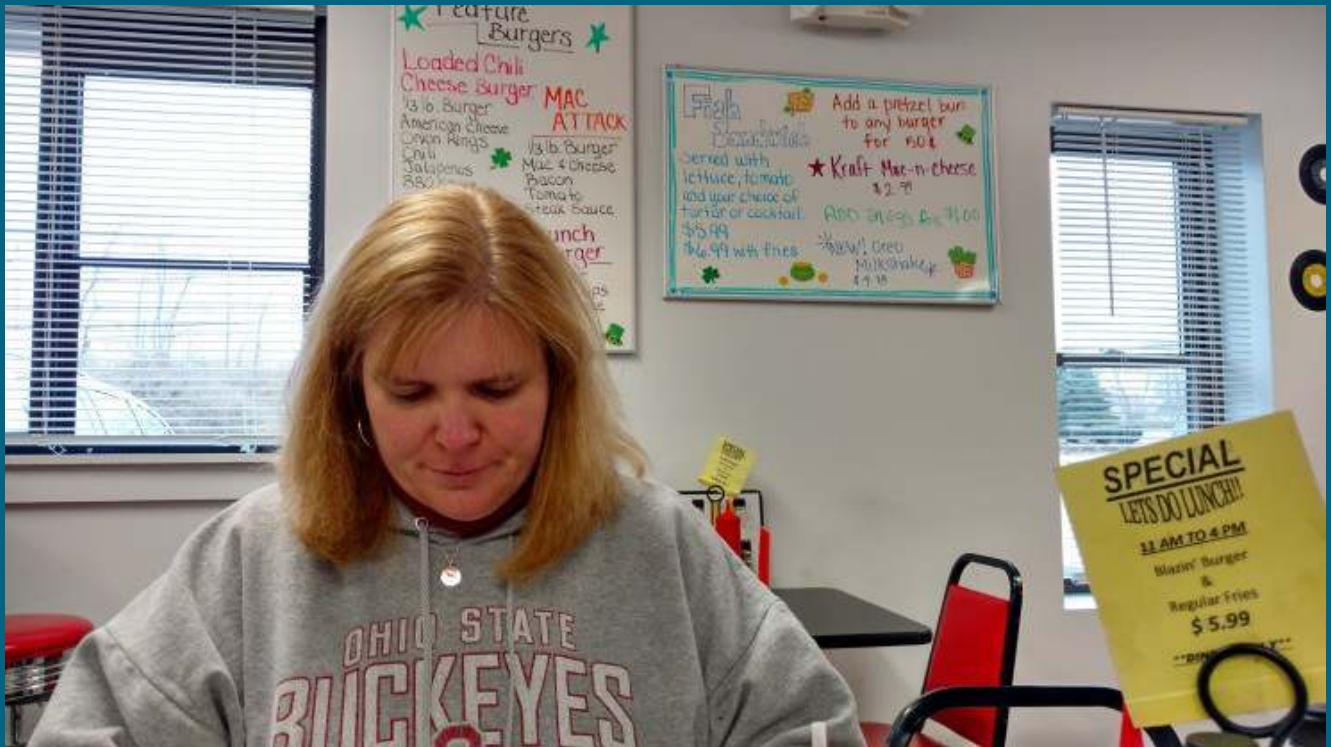
After a great stay at the Berlin Grande Hotel and some time in downtown Berlin, we stopped at [Walnut Creek Cheese](#) and [Swiss Village Bulk Food](#) store, Sugar creek. Then, we wound through a bunch of back roads and ended up on U.S. Route 250 just outside Strasburg. Wendi still did not know where we were going, until she saw the sign below:

These Burgers are Hot, No, Blazin'



The Starsburg location is small. It has a handful of tables and a few booths. But, what it lacks in size it makes up in flavor: The burgers are good. In fact, they were voted best burger by readers of a Tuscarawas County newspaper. While the restaurant serves hot dogs, chili dogs, grilled cheese sandwiches, fried chicken tender sandwiches, grilled chicken sandwiches and a number of side dishes, appetizers and salads, we were there for one thing: Burgers. However, it took some time to decide.

These Burgers are Hot, No, Blazin'



These Burgers are Hot, No, Blazin'

Diners can get a Blazin' Burger (a single, regular burger), a Double Blazin' Burger, an R U Serious Burger (three! patties), a selection of gourmet burgers or their featured burgers. The gourmet selection includes the Wild West Burger (with American cheese, bacon, onions and Wild West sauce); the Pittsburger (Swiss cheese, coleslaw, fresh cut fries and malt vinegar; this is a take-off of the Pittsburgh-based Primanti Bros. sandwiches, which feature coleslaw and fries on the sandwich); the Saute Burger (Swiss cheese, sauteed mushrooms and onions, and homemade steak sauce); and a few others. Wendi went with a Double Blazin' Burger with the Works, minus onions.

Among the featured burgers was the Mac Attack, a burger with Kraft macaroni and cheese (Kraft dinner for Canadians), bacon, tomato and steak sauce. This was my choice, however, Wendi and I split our burgers in half and we shared.



And, we had the obligatory fresh-cut fries. Wendi loves fresh-cut fries. We settled on the large basket, which was only \$2.49.

These Burgers are Hot, No, Blazin'



The burgers were very good. (Wendi says “incredible.”) It was just a nice, solid, good, old-fashioned American hamburger. When we go again, I will probably get the Double Blazin’ Burger. While I am glad I tried the Mac Attack, it is always a difficult proposition trying to keep the macaroni and cheese within the confines of the sandwich when eating this kind of burger. So, it ends up being a burger with a little mac and cheese and a small side of mac and cheese in the basket. It is easy to see why the readers voted Blazin’ Burgers the best in Tuscarawas County.

Jerry's Cafe: Are These the Best Burgers in Orrville?

Back in April, when Bobby and I attended the [Inaugural Cupcake Tour](#), we decided to end our adventure by grabbing a late lunch (or early dinner) at a restaurant in Orrville, Ohio. We really enjoy Ming Hing's lunch buffet, but it was too late for lunch. Our friend, Jessica Robinson, had told us about [Jerry's Cafe](#). She said that they have really good burgers. The truth is that they advertise their burgers as the "best in town." Given my propensity for red meat, especially for burgers, I had to give it a try.



If you don't know what you are looking for, you could very easily pass by the restaurant without even knowing it. It is nestled in the middle of a downtown city block with businesses on each side. Jerry's just has a small sign over the door. Since we were late for lunch and early for dinner, there were just a few tables taken when we arrived. It is clear by the interior that Jerry's is a place where people probably come to get a drink after work and maybe stay for a bite to eat. The menu is quite extensive with plenty of appetizers, salads, sandwiches and entrees to choose from.

Jerry's Cafe: Are These the Best Burgers in Orrville?



However, I was there for one thing and one thing only. That of course was a burger. Jerry's has plenty of options when it comes to burgers, too. After considering all options, I decided to order the Trolley Burger. It comes on grilled Italian bread with bacon, tomato, provolone cheese and ranch dressing. We ordered a basket of waffle fries because they only serve fresh cut fries on Thursday and waffle fries are my next favorite kind of fries after fresh cut. Bobby ordered the Jerry Burger with fries.

Jerry's Cafe: Are These the Best Burgers in Orrville?



When our burgers came out, we decided to share them so we could try each. I started with my half of the Trolley Burger and Bobby started with his half of the Jerry Burger. After Bobby's first bite, he said it reminded him of my mom's burgers. (Which if you ask me are the best burgers anywhere.) I didn't know how that could be because the burger I was eating didn't taste anything like my mom's. It was very good, but not like my mom's. So I put my Trolley Burger down and picked up my half of the Jerry Burger. Bobby was right, it did taste like my mom's!

Jerry's Cafe: Are These the Best Burgers in Orrville?



The Trolley Burger was delicious in its own right. Bobby and I both agree that the burger is loaded with flavor. There is so much complexity in the sandwich because of how the ingredients mingle with each other.



Jerry's Cafe: Are These the Best Burgers in Orrville?

We asked to see the manager (actually Bobby asked) because we wanted to tell her how much we enjoyed the burgers and to find out how the two could taste so different. She told us that most of the burgers were injected with au jus and grilled over hickory chips. However, the Jerry Burger is a mixture of ground beef mixed with bread crumbs, eggs and their “special seasoning.” That explained the different tastes and why it reminded us of my mom’s burgers. She mixes hers like that, too. Although I don’t think she would consider her seasoning “special.”

Jill Demlow, the manager and the owner’s niece, gave us a brief history of the restaurant, too. It has been in business since 1979. There was a fire in 2011, which caused the restaurant to close for a period of time while it was being remodeled. It reopened in 2012. Jill said she has been there for eleven years.



Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon: Wooster/Put-in-Bay Edition

Wendi, my wife and the founder of this blog, and I attended our first blogging conference this summer: Bloggy Conference 2016, which was held at Cedar Point. It was there we met Katrina Reed, from Miller Boat Lines, who attended the conference to build relationships with bloggers. From the meeting, we were given two tickets for ferry rides from Miller Boat Line and a golf cart from E's Golf Carts. There was a twist: Katrina wanted our dog, [Owney](#), to "write" the blog. He was more than happy to oblige. (Read his blog post [here](#).)



Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon: Wooster/Put-in-Bay Edition

Wendi and I do not often travel with Owney. So, this was a new adventure for us. Katrina let us know there were a number of pet-friendly places and most establishments with a patio allow dogs on it. Not sure what to do, Wendi and I were sitting on a bench along Delaware Avenue, and we could see Mr. Ed's Bar & Grille had a patio. So, I called and asked if we could bring our dog on the patio, and the answer was sure, dogs are welcome.



Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon: Wooster/Put-in-Bay Edition

As soon as we sat down, a bartender came out and brought Owney some water. I know the boy is cute, but he was served much quicker than we were.



It was a nice experience to be able to take Owney somewhere and enjoy a meal. However, it was a little bit of a challenge trying to make sure we were OK to eat and he was settled and not bothering anyone or anything. For the most part, he did a pretty good job. This was his first time going to a restaurant, and he handled it fairly well.

Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon: Wooster/Put-in-Bay Edition



Wendi and I liked the menu, but because we had Owney with us, we didn't want to spend a lot of time there. So, instead of getting an appetizer (like the homemade tortilla chips and fresh salsa or the pulled pork nachos), we just ordered sandwiches. Mr. Ed's had a full meal deal: Sandwich, fresh-cut fries and drink for \$9.99. Anyone who has been to a fast-food restaurant knows, you are not getting out for less than \$8 or \$9 anymore, so the meal deal was, in a word, a real deal. Wendi went with the fried cod sandwich.

Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon: Wooster/Put-in-Bay Edition



I was intrigued by the double cheeseburger. On Mr. Ed's website, it says the place was "established in 1997 as a small hometown pub, offering friendly staff, quick service, great food, inexpensive prices and great entertainment." The prices were very reasonable and the food was good. The service wasn't the quickest, but I think that was because it was October, it was a nice, but cool Saturday, the season is winding down, and the Ohio State Buckeyes game had yet to start. Having spent many years in the restaurant business (where overhead and food costs are high and margins low), I imagine the owner was trying to keep operating cost down. So, the servers were very busy inside, and, at the time, Wendi and I were the only ones eating on the patio.

Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon: Wooster/Put-in-Bay Edition



Wendi liked the fish sandwich. It had a mild taste, a crispy/crunchy exterior and a moist middle. The double cheeseburger was pretty good, too, though I would have preferred the patties to be seasoned a little more. The fresh-cut fries were great. They, on the other hand, were well seasoned. It seemed like either fresh-ground or kosher salt with fresh- or course-ground pepper.

So, by now you are probably wondering where the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon comes in. Well, I work at The Daily Record newspaper in Wooster, Ohio. One of my coworkers, Barb, graduated high school with the owner of Mr. Ed's, Ed Fitzgerald. I didn't find this out until after the trip. And while Ed isn't exactly Kevin Bacon, his restaurant was a star in our book.

As Disney would say, "It's a small world after all."