

BEER, CAMARADERIE ANCHOR UT-AREA PUB

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Publication Date: January 4, 2007 Page: 08 Section: XLEnt Edition: Final

“That’s unusual,” said my boyfriend, John.

We had come from watching a swim meet at the University of Texas, and we were, at that moment, walking into the Crown & Anchor Pub. John was looking at a “help wanted” sign, completely surprised that a staffer had left.

As we sat down, he noted that our waitress had been working at the bar for at least the six years John has been going there. And, in fact, some staff has been around for 15 and 16 years. The Crown & Anchor doesn’t experience much turnover — people have to die for the bar to get rid of them, 15-year employee Derven Rodgers jokes. You know you’re in a good neighborhood pub when even the staff doesn’t want to leave.

During the past six years, I’ve stopped by the Crown & Anchor several times, and the place has always felt consistent and consistently good — the long tables “outside” in the covered patio, where smokers hang, the myriad tables inside where nonsmokers breathe freely, the deck where all folks mix.

As the pub perches close to UT, it tends to draw university types: grad students, the odd professor or two, the of-age upperclassmen and their dogs. The entire place holds about 250 beer fans at any given moment.

The real draw, of course, is the beer. Like the Gingerman and other pubs, Crown & Anchor lures patrons with the promise of hearty beers, exotic beers, local beers and a few standards (which we could call classics). Thirty draft choices entice the connoisseur, and the joint serves approximately 97 beers in bottles.

I’m not much of a lager/amber/ale/stout/porter person (beer sometimes does rude things to my poor body), so when I do indulge, I want a good beer, a Paulaner or a Duvel or a Fireman’s Four, which makes places like Crown & Anchor appealing. (FYI: This joint is strictly beer and wine — no booze.)

Happy hour runs from 11 a.m. till 7 p.m., seven days a week, and is one reason folks love this bar. Domestic pints start at \$1.50, and imports can set you back \$3.50; pitchers range from \$6 to \$12.

Also appealing is that biergarten feeling: tables are long and shared; people willingly scooch down to make room for you, especially if you’re carrying a pitcher (the most cost-effective way to order). The environment is great for those long philosophical discussions that get progressively more involved as the night wears on and the pitchers flow — you know, conversations like whether or not the hierarchical nature of language is inherently masculine, or what truth really means. Or whether you really need any rules beyond those my friends’ kids learned in preschool: 1. Don’t hurt yourself or anyone else and 2. Keep

your underwear on.

You can place food orders at the bar and staff will seek you out when it's ready, largely by yelling your name in whatever part of the bar you've promised to sit in. The pub grub is hearty — the menu lays claims to the best burgers in town. I can vouch that the veggie burger is tasty, and I hear tell the regular burgers are, too (something about a seasoned grill).

Inasmuch as I'm not really a beer person, there's something about crisp, cool weather that makes the idea of a cold beer and a good neighborhood pub — with longtime staff and worn wooden tables — ultimately seductive.

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