

Restaurant Review 7 Harpo's September 26, 2014

**HARPO'S PLEASE DON'T PASS THE SALT:** Lunch with Jean on September 8 was a trip to Harpo's in the Hilltown Shopping center on Olive near Chesterfield Parkway. Harpo's has been an institution for college kids who just turned 21 or have a good fake ID in Columbia for over 40 decades. However the original owner is selling them off and now the three Harpo's (Columbia, St. Louis and Kansas City) all have different owners.



At first I surprised that even though we were going for lunch we might get carded at the door and be turned away because we were too old.

I was playing the part of Claude Rains. We sat at a table in the almost empty dining room (lunch rush was over and it was 1:15) and waited for over 10 minutes before a waitress stopped by to say hello.

(Most people remember Claude Rains in this role:



Capt. Renault in Casablanca.

but he won the Academy Award in 1931 for this role:



The Invisible Man, who I thought I was for 10 minutes at Harpo's )

Once we got around to ordering Jean decided to go with the Westport Chicken Grille sandwich (\$8.99) apparently named after the Harpo's in Kansas City located in the Westport District. Jean specifically ordered "No bacon" on the sandwich.

Our waitress said while "all the food is good" the burgers were the most popular item. So I ordered a cheeseburger (\$7.40) with a side of Onion Rings. Chicken and Wild Rice (\$3.99) was the soup of the day and we tried a cup. Jean and I also decided to split the "Load Baked Potato. "

The soup was hearty but it was way too salty, and I'm a guy who is always reaching for a salt shaker. I wondered aloud if this was a way to sell more beer.



Jean's Westport Chicken sandwich arrived with the bacon that she had asked to be eliminated. The chicken was actually pretty much hidden under a slice of ham, cheese and the bacon. That said, Jean gave a thumbs up to the sandwich. The loaded baked potato gave every appearance as having been leftover from the previous night. It came out dry and cold. I asked for some butter just to moisten it up.



There was a \$1.00 up charge to get piece of lettuce with a slice of tomato and onion I asked for and the pickle that I didn't ask for. The mayo I ordered either on the burger or on the side did not arrive and we had to catch our waitress and remind her to bring it.

Once I bit into the burger my mind went back to the first thing I had for lunch...the soup. The burger seemed to be loaded with salt. I like some salt on my burger, but this one tasted like it was a subsidy of the Morton Company. At first I thought maybe my taste buds were still overloaded with salt from the soup, so I cut off a section of the burger and asked Jean to try it. She immediately reacted with a "little salty isn't it" comment. Again I wondered if this was an in-house attempt to sell more beer. I looked at the walls adorned with MU memorabilia, neon beer signs, security cameras, but I did not see any posters of a girl in yellow boots with a yellow umbrella.

This is the second time I had lunch with Jean and as a fat guy, did not bother finishing my cheeseburger. (The first time was at Mia Sorella.)

The onion rings were admittedly frozen and not home made. But they were cooked perfectly and you could bite right through the batter crust and onion. If you can't bite through the onion or the crust crumbles away leaving you holding the onion the o-rings were either undercooked or overcooked. These were perfect and tasted good.



Overall we are in no hurry to return to Harpo's unless I have a desire to be around sporting events on big screen TVs and people younger than me swilling beer and a need to increase my sodium intake.