

Beauty and the Beets



Travel, Food and Fairy Tales



Guy Fieri's American Kitchen + Bar – The Villages, FL

Guy Fieri began to build his empire over 20 years ago when he opened his first restaurant in California. It wasn't until ten years later when he won the second season of The Next Food Network Star that he began to make a national name for himself. Now he co-owns or leases his name to 18 restaurants across the globe, including his latest venture – Guy Fieri's American Kitchen + Bar in The Villages, Florida. The Villages is located 45 miles north of Orlando and was originally established as a retirement community. The area is now designated as the fastest growing town in the United States, with 32 Neighborhood Centers, 17 Villages, 3 Town Squares, and 48 golf courses. Many residents drive electric egg shaped golf carts around from village to village and there are numerous shops and restaurants to keep residents occupied and happy. One of which is Guy Fieri's located in the Lake Sumter Landing Village.



I have to disclose that I was invited as a guest of the restaurants and we were given the opportunity to try a few different things on the menu. However, I can assure you that all opinions are my own.

We arrived about 2pm on a Sunday and the place was hopping. The bar is in the center of the restaurant and lined with televisions tuned into the many NFL games. We were sat in a booth against the wall where I was able to watch the staff moving about. What really impressed me was how much teamwork they pitch in working together. Our main server was Sarah, however, because of the teamwork, we never went without a beverage, our food was never served cold, and the managers move about the floor talking to everyone, keeping the customers happy.

Mr. Beet and I started our meal with the Trash Can Nachos, a pile of warm tortilla chips, melted cheese, bourbon brown sugar BBQ sauce, cheddar cheese, black beans, jalapenos, and pickled red onion.



Normally served with smoked beef brisket, we asked to have that kept off as Mr. Beet is a Pescatarian. The nachos are served in a tall can, which is lifted off upon serving and the nachos keep the shape of the can.

Of course as soon as we dug in the nachos fell apart which was a good thing as it made it easier to scoop up all the delicious toppings. But be forewarned, the nachos are HUGE and are more suited for at least four people, unless you are like the two of us and like to really pig out.

Mr. Beet also ordered a small garden salad with the house shallot vinaigrette. The salad also has the same pickled red onions as the nachos and if you have never tried pickled onions, this is the place to do it.



I had been told about the wings, normally something that wouldn't be on our radar, but I was highly intrigued by them. First of all, the wings are big, I mean monster big. I did ask if I was being served a special plate as the kitchen knew I was going to write about the restaurant, or, is this the normal size of the wings. Turns out the wings are always quite large. And, perhaps most deliciously, the wings are brined and roasted before being fried, so they were crispy on the outside and tender on the inside.

I chose to have my wings tossed in their signature Bourbon Brown Sugar BBQ Sauce. The most amazing BBQ sauce I have ever tasted. You know I have to come home and try to replicate it in my kitchen. I'll never get it right, so I will just buy a bottle to take with me next time.



For our entrees we decided to split the Apricot-Jalapeno Glazed Salmon and the Veggie Burger. Starting with the Salmon, the Apricot Glaze was delicious. Though we couldn't really pick up the spiciness of jalapeno, the glaze was sweet, perfect for the salmon.

Served with a side of rosemary mashed potatoes and sautéed broccoli rabe, the salmon is a feel good meal if you want something a bit lighter than the meatloaf or NY Strip Steak on the menu.

We also tried the Morgan's Veggie Burger, named for Guy's sister. It was Morgan who used to lecture Guy about health and vegetables so it is appropriate that she have this Vegetarian burger named for her. And it is really good. The patty is a Vegan blend of black beans, chickpeas, white beans, black olives, red bell pepper, garlic, artichoke hearts, jalapeno, and oats. Topped with lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, and Donkey Sauce, the burger is not dry or crumbly. It held together well and served on a garlic buttered wheat bun. If you choose to make the burger Vegan, ask to have



the Donkey Sauce and garlic butter omitted from the dish.

The Donkey Sauce is a blend of garlic, lemon juice, and mayo – more like an aioli. It's also a delicious dip for the fries served along with our burger. Pardon me, the fry trio – waffle fries, curly fries, and regular fries.

Also making a good fry dip is the Yuengling Honey Mustard sauce. Trust me- try it. However, be forewarned, the restaurant will not serve it to the kids so don't ask.

We ordered the Triple Double Mint Pie for dessert. Ready for this – it's mint chocolate chip ice cream and mint candy, on an Oreo cookie crust, and served with hot fudge sauce and whipped cream.



Kin, the manager, also brought us the Dark Chocolate Layered Cake. The piece was so large we brought it home and split it for breakfast the next day. Loved the toffee accents with the dark chocolate ganache.

We really had an amazing experience at Guy Fieri's American Kitchen + Bar. The service was impeccable, the food was well prepared and presented, tasted amazing, and happily filled us up. We left very happy and impressed people. I highly recommend you stop in for some grub the next time you are passing through The Villages.

Thank you to Kin and Sarah for the hospitality. I look forward to visiting again soon!

(note: While I normally assign a Sprout rating to my restaurant reviews, I do not do so when my meals are comped)



Disclosure: I was invited as a guest of Guy Fieri's American Kitchen + Bar and was provided with my meal. However, all opinions are my own. I am in no way influenced or pressured into writing a positive review.)