

SMALL BITES

THE PLAIN DEALER

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2006

DREAM MEAL COMES CLOSE AT UPPER DECK IN BEREА

Anyone who eats- and that's everybody except maybe Nicole Richie—should take a moment and establish the goal of someday enjoying the perfect meal.

It should be an ideal, a dream, yet something not impossible to experience.

It might be some 12-course, three hour spectacular, with exotic dishes, rare wines and delicate desserts. It could be a completely organic, Earth-friendly serving of sustenance that you plan on returning to the soil with a clandestine trip to the woods. Or maybe it's a simple portion of whipped cream with the perfection

coming in the presentation: served on the silky skin of your soul mate.

Mine is a bit more Cro-Magnon.

I hope to someday consume an entire meal, from appetizer to dessert, without the use of utensils. I came very close at The Upper Deck Sports Café in Bereа.

The hopping, high-ceilinged hangout is uniquely Cleveland. It's a place where Kid Leo would be recognized by half the people inside and still be on the T-shirts of the other half.

Front pages marking our teams' highlights and low-

lights decorate the walls (the 1957 sports page reporting the line drive to Herb Score's noggin was posted above our four-top).

Upstairs sits the best—and loudest—coin-operated bowling machine around.

We showed up on a recent Saturday evening and watched Notre Dame escape UCLA on the Upper Deck's nice array of television.

A raucous fund raiser for a local Little League team had half the place smoky and rocking. Among the raffle items being hawked were a "basket of booze" and an impressive set of wrenches.

But I was trying to make it

THE SCORE

- **Food:** 3 stogies
- **Service :** 3 stogies
- **Beer selection :** 3 stogies

THE UPPER DECK
SPORTS CAFÉ

375 W. Bagley Road

Berea, Oh

440-891-7427

CLEVELAND NIGHTLIFE FEB. 2007 35 HOT SPOTS FOR AFTER DARK

The bossman rode your rump more than usual last week. The wife's on you about cleaning the garage. But it's Saturday, and you've got the Cavs at the Q and Ohio State in Columbus. So you "run errands" and plunk down on one of 32 stools in front of the 75-

foot long bar at The Upper Deck. Decision time. Where should you sit so one eyeball catches LeBron while the other stays glued to the Buckeyes. Later, try your hand at video poker or shoot pool with your "errand-running" buddies. Every day should be Satur-

day.

Beers on tap:16 The Cost: \$1.50 "beer of the month" selections, daily drink specials. The Customer: casually dressed male sports fans in their 40's and the occasional female. College kids come out for the live music.

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through the evening without tools.

The wings were crispy and outstanding (I went with “hot” after our waitress actually winced when I asked about the heat of “Outrageous”).

With my flatware still clean, I moved on to the Upper Deck’s signature: ribs.

Some rib joints boast that the meat falls from the bone when you pick one up. That

didn’t happen here. The meat fell off the bone when I looked at the plate.

Covered in a delightful, tangy sauce, the rib meat was in some sort of super state of matter between solid and liquid. It held it’s shape yet liquefied in the mouth. (More research needs to be done on this wonderful phenomenon).

After the ribs my hands worked on the fries. Soon after, I looked over and no-

ticed a nice side of coleslaw.

Dang. The dream would have to wait. I reached for the silverware.

After all that food and two drafts, dessert wasn’t even an option.

I was done, defeated. Stick a fork in me.

EYES ON THE FRIES
(DINING FOR GUYS)
GIVES AN AVERAGE
GUYS PERSPECTIVE
ON CASUAL PLACES
WHERE HE MIGHT
GRAB A BEER WITH
HIS BUDDIES, HAVE
A LAID-BACK DATE
NIGHT OR ENJOY A
MEAL OUT WITH
THE KIDS