

The Pilgrimage to Kahiki

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**THE KAHIKI IS NOW CLOSED
FOREVER!**

Toronto is a great city. It has anything a hungry urban adventurer such as myself could want: Little India, Chinatown, Greektown, Little Italy, Little Portugal, Koreatown, even a small enclave of Ethiopian restaurants... but no Tiki Bar. Sadly, Polynesia has no representation north of the 42nd parallel. And I was hungry for it... HUNGRY, I tell you! So, I had to do a little research.

I found the Tiki bar Review Pages <http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Fuji/2185/tikimain.html> which is a handy guide to ever-dwindling Tiki bars in North America. From there I determined that I was facing eight hours of travel no matter which way I sliced it - I could go to Jardin Tiki in Montreal, or the Kahiki in Columbus Ohio. Luckily for me, my paramour Jason lives in Detroit (yeah, it was an internet romance, wanna make something of it?)



The amount of righteous flaming hawaiiana is so overwhelming, I have to close my eyes.

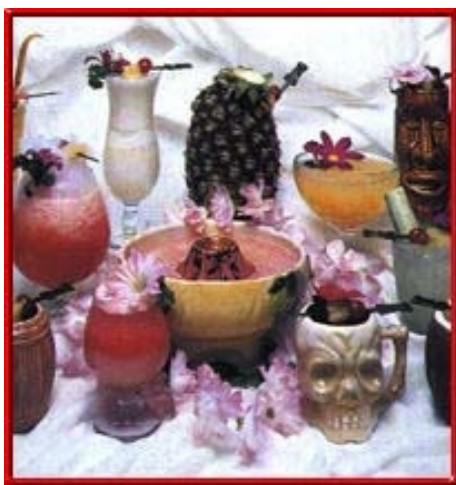
which is only 3 hours from Columbus. So, on my whirlwind Thanksgiving tour of Michigan, we took 2 days out to go to Columbus and feel the magic.

I feel I made the right choice, but after the Kahiki, I am afraid everything else Tiki may pale in comparison. In fact, the Kahiki was recently accepted into the National Register of Historic Places due to its being the penultimate example of Tiki culture!

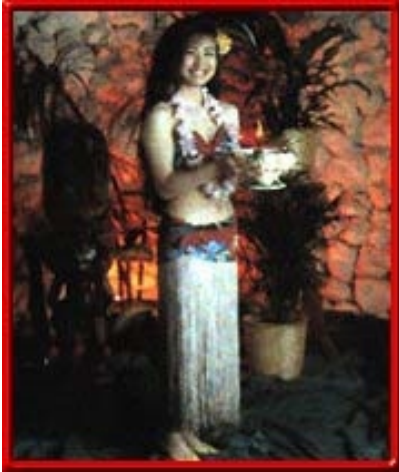


Pilgrims have gotten lost in here and been found days later, smiling beatifically.

After beeing greeting by two giant flaming moai at the door, you step inside to the sounds of waterfalls, birds, and ukeleles. The interior of Kahiki actually contains grass huts and palm trees. We happened to be seated on the aquarium side, but there is also a rainforest side that is full of exotic birds flying around and little rainshowers and stuff (all behind glass though so you dont get any exotic bird diseases in your pu-pu platter). There was a band playing in front of the giant 40 foot tall tiki god fireplace, but by the time we finished eating, the musicians had disappeared, so I never got to see them. (The restaurant is comprised of many rooms and huts, so you can never see the whole thing at once). Starting counter-clockwise in the entrance is the Grande Foyer, the Cloak Room, the Beachcomber Shop, the Outrigger Bar, entrance to the Village Dining Room, Maui Bar and Cocktail Lounge, and access to



If you drink them all, you get a free hangover!



The mystery girl and her mystery drink.



Unfortunately there is no tap labelled 'Mai Tai'.

the Rest Rooms (with their bitchin' tiki taps!). Of course, I say bitchin' in only the most ironic self aware way. But its better than saying they're 'cute' which is what the other girl in the bathroom said to me when she saw me snapping a photo of them. 'Its, okay, dont be embarrassed" she said, "its kinda cute". Embarrassed? Hardly! Cute? Don't insult the Kahiki with such words!

Going into the Village Dining Room, you will find the Music Bar, Kalakaua Street, the Molokai Hut, the Kauai Garden Booths and the Music Bar. Frankly, I was stunned with the polynesian majesty of it all. My dinner date said it was 'the most amazing restaurant he's ever been to in his entire life'. And these are strong words from a man whom I suspect eats out, and eats out well, 6.5 nights out of seven.

My first order of business was to order the Headhunter - A rum based concoction that comes in a tiki head mug you can keep. After one of these babies I was already singing 'Ding Dong Avon Calling' so I can attest to the strength of the drinks, which I had heard from other sources, were weak. Not on this night, my friends. The potency of these island cocktails were clearly evident by about 11 pm, when I spied numerous Headhunter casualties stumbling and staggering about the lobby singing showtunes.



Come back, musicians! We were just about to request 'Stairway to Heaven!'



One of these objects is not a totem.

Also tempting was the mystery drink, which is brought to your table by the mystery drink girl, accompanied with the sound of a gong. As this particularly mysterious liquid was intended to serve four, and Jason was driving, we passed on that one. But next time, I will definitely get it. I just need more livers to help me. We did however, order four of the previously mentioned headhunters (2 virgin, 2 non-virgin) so we could get a set of four tiki mugs. They also have skull mugs and coconut mugs, but I went for the moai. There really was no contest, as far as I was concerned.

My dinner consisted of gooey sweet and sour chicken and peppers nestled in a hollowed out pineapple with a side of fried rice. I think it was called 'Chicken Hawaiian' or something rather unexotic like that. My dinner companion (and vegetarian pin-up boy) Jason went for the spicy veggie stir fry. Oh, and we both had an order of veggie spring rolls for an appetizer. The food was passable, but understand this: if you're going for the food, you're missing the point. The food is just the excuse, the vehicle so to speak, for you to be sitting there and taking in the hula flava.

We were tempted to order the Big Fat Mamasan for dessert (billed as "The Crazy Dessert of Kahiki") but I was full beyond the bursting point, so we just had the creamsicle cake instead, which came in a brandy

snifter (as all good cakes should) covered in whipped cream and a cherry.

After the food had been consumed (and the plastic flowers sticky with pineapple juice had been securely fastened in my hair) We retired to the Outrigger Bar, as we really didn't want this night to end. The Kahiki, and I suspect the rest of Columbus, closes scandalously early, so we were really the only people left at that point, next to some drunken advertising hipsters (don't you just hate em? Oh, wait, er...). In fact, I would say in general, Kahiki's clientele consisted of only two factions: drunken advertising hipsters looking for a retro good time, or fifty something divorcees on a first date. Okay, and a few kid's birthday parties.



A talking Tiki head discovered the next morning at the 'Adventure!' exhibit at the Centre of Science and Industry in Columbus. Further proof that the Tikis are infiltrating Ohio at an alarming rate.

In closing, the Kahiki exceeded my expectations, even after reading all the raving reviews from other tiki aficionados. In fact, there has been talk of a return pilgrimage next year.

Next Stop On The Transcontinental Tiki Tour: Tiki Tiki in Yokohama, Japan (I shall be returning January 4th with the poop. Or should I say, the pu-pu?)

<http://www.city.yokohama.jp/me/yoke/echo/98.6/echod98.6.html>

And now, for your edification and inebriation, the Kahiki drink menu:

BACKSCRATCHER - Spirits and mango juice blended for that itch that can't be scratched.

BAHIA - A snowy concoction of white rum with coconut and pineapple juices.

HEADHUNTER - The hunted head is filled with rum and tropical juices. The head is yours to take home.

COCONUT KISS - The coconut softly kisses the gin and liqueur.

MAI TAI - Mai Tai means "the best".

PINA PASSION - Heighten your desires with a blend of tropical juices and rum.

SCORPION - The south sea's romantic sting for lovers.

MYSTERY BLOSSOM - For the blossoming lady with a sweet smile.

SMOKING ERUPTION - Watch it erupt before your eyes.

SUFFERING BASTARD - What's your limit?

BARRELITO - A whole barrel of

spirits mixed with potent rum.

ZOMBIE - A mighty combination
that ♦s lethal. THE MUG IS
YOURS!

ADDITIONAL EXOTIC DRINKS -

PORT LIGHT

STARBOARD LIGHT

LONG ISLAND ICE TEA

SINGAPORE SLING

MALAYAN MIST

NATIVE NECTAR

CHI CHI

POTENT POTION

PENANG No.1

MAIDENS PRAYER

MISTY ISLE

KAHIKI SWIZZLE

JUNGLE FEVER

COFFEE GROG

SATIN ♦S SIN

TONGA TALE

VICIOUS VIRGIN

TEST PILOT

BLUE HURRICANE

FOG CUTTER

HOT BUTTERED RUMS

NAVY GROG

DERBY DAIQUIRI

MANGOLA COCKTAIL

Aloha from lil' Fishstick!

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