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The Blog That Ate Southwest Florida

Duty requires me to eat a burger every now and then. I used to limit myself to just a few over the course of a year — for health reasons — but I think I've blown my quota already for 2007. Thanks a lot, Foster's Grille.

I actually pulled a U-turn after passing by this week-old restaurant on Pine Island Road in Cape Coral. "Home of the CharBurger," the sign boasts. Well, it was near dinnertime so what the heck.

Foster's is a small chain of about 20 restaurants that started in Virginia and spread to Georgia, Maryland, Missouri and North Carolina, according to www.fostersgrille.com. The Cape location is the first in Florida. The sparse interior reminded me of Applebee's, but the menu's much smaller: burgers, hot dogs, sandwiches, a salad — all for less than \$10.

"Too Big for Two Hands" is how the Web site describes Foster's half-pound char-grilled burger. Don't fall for that: I had no trouble handling it. (Unlike the monster burgers at Cheeburger Cheeburger). Nevertheless, the patty at Foster's is a good inch-thick and fills out the sesame-seed bun nicely. The meat had a good char on the outside that enhanced the flavor, but it remained juicy inside.

The real surprise: the french fries. They were obviously hand-cut, with skin intact, which always boosts the flavor. They were well browned and not the least bit greasy. Hands-down the best fries I've had in a long time. (Thankfully, the waitress talked me out of substituting a salad for 75 cents more.)

Even if I can't eat another burger this year, I might have to stop at Foster's again just for french fries.

— Foster's Grill, Lighthouse Plaza, 728 Pine Island Road, Cape Coral; call 573-4454. (It's just west of Nicholas Pkwy.)

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