

Sam's Bar & Lounge

6801 Leetsdale Drive
Phone: 303-322-6401

Hipster Scale



Dive Bar Rating



Sam's Bar & Lounge is one of those rare dives you just feel really good walking into—bright walls, plenty of natural light, warm wood tones, linoleum/tile floor. It's cut from a quality, 1950s, still-glowing-neon-sign mold, and both operated and inhabited by the type of folks who would take offense if you referred to it as a hole in the wall. As any seasoned barfly knows, there's a huge difference between run-down, as which many dives in this collection qualify, and just old, which describes Sam's. Yeah, the bathroom door doesn't lock, the bar of soap is a bit limey and a coin-operated vending machine dispenses cardboard nudie photos. So? After 55 years, at least there's a door. And soap. And who's going to complain about boobs? Even gay men love breasts. I'm serious.

Attracting everyone from working-class stiffs to retired veterans to happy-hour-seeking suits to neck-tattoo tough guys, Sam's not only serves cheap cold ones and cocktails, but also an impressive red-basket-and-wax-paper menu of wings, fries, burgers, sandwiches and Mexican food—all of it under \$10. On Sundays, the Hangover Special from 9 a.m. until noon includes a Bloody Mary and a bowl of “famous” green chili for \$7.50. Kids aren't allowed after 3 p.m., but that still leaves 8 hours to strap in the car seats and get a solid daylight buzz going while the little ones play pool, throw darts or shake the Shadow-themed pinball machine. Maybe a babysitter is a better idea, but you do what you want—it's your therapy bill later on.

When I visited during the heart of 2009's NCAA basketball tourney, four of the five televisions—one flatscreen, one giant rear-projection and three simple tubes—were turned to NASCAR instead of hoops. Autographed and decorated dollar bills hung from the ceiling over the rectangular bar; and a stuffed Tasmanian Devil doll was nailed to the wall above the register with a \$5 bill tacked to its mouth. This sort of eclectic décor, de rigueur in the dive-bar world, is a comforting reminder of why dives like Sam's feel so good to walk into.