

Beware the fake sports bars



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Please pardon my audacity as I temporarily grant myself the authority to re-define the way we categorize sports bars.

Hang TVs until your eyes cross and pad the menu with wings, nachos and all the fried cheese you want—unless those flatscreens have got the sound on, it's just not a sports bar.

It's a scene too pervasive to name names: Saturday prime-time at the newest "upscale neighborhood sports bar." Multiple college games flashing across the screens above noisy diners. Top 40 hits blaring.

Occasionally someone will look up from a mouthful of 8 p.m. dinner to check the score. But jerseys are scarce and cheers even more so. Because this isn't a sports bar—it's a pub

with a little extra visual stimulation.

The audio may be pumped over the speaker system for Sunday Bears games, but I would argue that one game a week just doesn't cut it: A true sports bar is a place for fans to get rowdy, to backtalk commentators. It's not a place to yell over the latest Rihanna track (unless she happens to be part of a half-time show).

This isn't to say that the model of the "upscale neighborhood sports bar" doesn't work. After all, not everyone is looking to be bombarded with an ESPN soundtrack when they go out on a Saturday night. Not everyone cares about your unranked alma mater.

For a real football-watching experience, you're going to have to pack into a sports bar that shows your team some love by turning the sound on. If you're having trouble finding the right spot, check out our guide at chicago.metromix.com/football.

But be wary of the lure of the flashy new spot down the road: Just because it has more TVs than you can count and a 25-cent wing deal doesn't mean you'll get the full experience. Better to be crammed in the run-down,



The Scout Waterhouse & Kitchen is a prime South Loop sports bar. Lenny Gilmore/Redeye

over-crowded, team-endorsed bar than be pummeled with hate glares from patrons in dress shirts noshing on \$15 burgers.

EMILY VAN ZANDT IS A REDEYE REPORTER. TO THOSE SITTING NEXT TO HER DURING THE LAST MIZZOU GAME—OUR SINCEREST APOLOGIES. EVANZANDT@TRIBUNE.COM

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