Chuckbox - Tempe, Arizona

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Being my birthday, some of my friends at work took me out to lunch at one of my favorite burger places in the area, the Chuckbox, down on the Arizona State University campus. If you've never been to the Chuckbox, it's a campus institution.

There is nothing fancy about the Chuckbox. It's dark, grimy, and wonderful. They do burgers, chicken sandwiches, and hotdogs, although I've never ordered anything there but a burger. When you walk in, you are immediately in the ordering line where you specify what you want from an overhead menu board. Burgers come in three sizes, and are grilled on a charcoal grill right in front of your eyes (and nose). The aroma of freshly grilled burgers alone is worth the trip. When you order your burger, you are asked if you want cheese, and if so, what type. Today I went with swiss, and a side of fries. At any time, there may be two dozen burgers and rolls cooking on the grill, so the Chuckbox has come up with a method for marking which burgers are to get which types of cheeses, using toothpicks. I haven't had a chance to figure out the code yet, but there seems to be some combination of the number of pics, whether they are straight or broken, and the color tassel on the end.

Once you've gotten your burger, your next stop is the condiment bar, where you can dress it as you like using a variety of goodies such as the standard ketchup and mustard, steak sauce, hot sauce, mayo, pickles, onions, and jalapeños. Today, I went with mayo (for the burger and the fries), pickles, and onions.

Sit inside if you like, but as I said, the decor doesn't offer much. If it's a nice day out, which it almost always is in Tempe, head outside for the porch seating and the meandering pace of academic life as students filter by on their way here and there.

My burger was cooked to a perfect medium and had nice grill marks and a great charcoal flavor that was strong, but not overpowering. If you are looking for good burgers in the Phoenix area, it's hard to go wrong at the Chuckbox.

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