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the steele fork: a beer, a dog & spongebob

by jarrett steele

ON A NEARLY PERFECT EARLY SUMMER NIGHT, the dining companion and I took in some baseball at Dr. Pepper/7UP Ballpark, home to your Frisco RoughRiders. After parking for free in the lot of the mall, the other non-season ticket holders without premium platinum preferred parking boarded the equally gratis school bus for the quick drop-off at the ballpark (tip: walk, it's not far).

Designed by the same company that did the other ballpark in Arlington, this diamond truly is a picturesque jewel where every seat has a great view. It's a miniaturized version of the big leagues and a true family-friendly experience. It's kids in baseball and softball uniforms running amok. It's popcorn and Cracker Jack and all that. It's not a dining destination.

The older couple to our right shelled peanuts (\$3), albeit into an empty cup rather than scattering them all over the ground and on my shoes. The younger couple to our left obliged their cute 4-year-old's whims for cotton candy, nachos and snow cones. In my book, stadium food typically ranks slightly above airport food, which only trumps airline food. I have eaten the sausage on a stick, and I have paid the price. But unless you do what you're supposed to do at large, organized sporting events – tailgate – you're not there to dine, you're there for the experience.

The ticket holders in the choicest box seats had servers running food trays to them, and the "real fans" (you know, the suite crowd) were noshing behind plexiglas windows in the Founder's Club Restaurant in the press box. The Fork got in line at the concession stand with the rest.

My dining companion's individual sized cheese pizza (\$4.75) wasn't spectacular, but at least tasted fresh and didn't seem like it had been under the heat lamp since before the 'Riders took batting practice before the game.

The most innovative offerings were either the cheese steak sandwiches (\$5.50) or smoked turkey legs (\$4.50), available at opposite ends of

the park near the foul poles. Our favorite treat on the breezy, clear night was the hot Bavarian almonds (\$3.25), plucked out of a syrupy sweetened bath and into a paper cone, where they were quickly devoured hot.

To support the hometown sponsorship in the mid-innings, my companion opted for the Royal Crown Cola in a souvenir cup (\$3.75). The beer choices were not as minimal as the sodas, and though the bottled selections at the "Watering Hole" pushcart were more extensive, I ordered the pride of St. Louis on tap (\$5). My overpriced Bud was poured cold and went well with a plump, well-cooked all-beef jumbo dog, majestically adorned with thick grilled onions and spicy brown mustard. Like my Father used to say: "Hits the spot."

The longest line of the night wasn't for the draught beer or the ladies room (as my dining companion gratefully noted). They were lined up 20 deep for Dippin' Dots, the "ice cream of the future." Kids also swarmed around the self-serve snow cone flavor dispenser, where they could mix unnaturally bright colored flavors to their heart's content.

With the home team down late in the game, the biggest, most telling moment of the evening juiced the crowd. As one of the few couples without kids in tow, we were startled when an animated pirate appeared on the Jumbotron and yelled, "Are you ready kids?"

Every last kid in the ballpark from age 2 and up screamed the reply in unison: "Aye, Aye Captain," then answered the singing question "Who lives in a pineapple, under the sea?" Obviously, Spongebob Squarepants is huge with your average RoughRider fan.

Everyone working the game, from the lady overseeing the kids at the hot dog stand, the sweet German nuts guy, and the true friend of the fan, the beer man, were friendly and efficient. The between innings entertainment and giveaways kept even the littlest fans engaged. Though pigskin is my preferred game, baseball in Frisco makes for a relaxing night of people watching and traditional ballpark fare.

Fork Tips: Outfield seating on the grass is available; but if you want reserved seats, buy ahead of game day.

Frisco RoughRiders@ Dr Pepper/Seven Up Ballpark
N. Dallas Tollway & State Hwy. 121, Frisco (972)731-9200

Home Games
April-September
See the schedule
<http://ridersbaseball.com>

Food	
Service	N/A
Atmosphere	
Value	
<i>(scale of five forks)</i>	



Jarrett Steele is a writer living on the verge of Frisco. When his fork isn't busy sampling new and interesting restaurants in town, you'll find him kicking back and grilling out.

