

The following email was posted on the Bluesfester site following the 2009 Smokin' In Steele BBQ & Blues event.

To: Bayfront_Bluesfesters@yahoo.com
From: fluffyvw@yahoo.com
Date: Mon, 1 Jun 2009 15:49:28 +0000
Subject: [Bayfront_Bluesfesters] Smokin' In Steele review

There were quite a number of Bluesfesters in attendance at the Smokin' in Steele festival in Owatonna over the weekend. What a terrific time. Add another one to my personal can't miss calendar for next year!

I arrived a little late on Friday, having given myself a nice case of the blues by trying to play golf that afternoon. As I mentioned to someone, if my game had been as good as the weather, I could turn pro!

Upon arrival, I found our campsite, where Bart and Vicki had already set-up our shared site and had even brought Kaye and her scooter along with my cooler and gear. How nice to get somewhere late and have most of the work already done!

I was impressed with the camping area. The grassy sites were located several blocks from the main festival, but it was an easy walk. There were golf carts running around and they were happy to shuttle us, too. The sites themselves had water and electric. There was a really clean building nearby with showers and rest room facilities.

We camped next to friends from Rochester, most of whom I know from BBF and other places. Between us, we partied pretty much around the clock.

The food was interesting. The professional barbecue entrants were beyond belief. I don't know that I've ever seen such extensive equipment. Most had super sized RVs and trailers to haul all this stuff. These people are serious!

There was also a number of amateur contestants. They offered a "taste" of their menu for \$1. I don't know if it gets better than the grilled asparagus I had along with pork chunks from one of the contestants.

There were also several commercial vendors who had reasonably priced and delicious barbecue menus. The festival offered a \$5 all you can eat breakfast on Sunday. If you left this festival hungry, it was by your own choice!

The music was all indoors in a huge beer garden. There was a good stage, a big dance floor and lots of tables and chairs available. While I generally prefer the music to be outdoors on a nice weekend like this, there was nothing objectionable about the indoor area.

I went to get a beer and had a really nice surprise...for \$3 you could get your choice of a nice assortment of non-standard flavors.

If you spot me looking a little fishy, it could be from the quantity of "Landshark" I consumed.

Ah...and then there was music. After all, isn't that why I go to these things anyway?

I missed Austin, MN based Plan B, due to my late arrival. I have seen them on several occasions and they have never failed to satisfy.

Brandon Scott Sellner played two long sets to close out Friday night. Brandon was as "hot" as ever and spent time playing in the audience on more than one song. Does this fine young player ever slow down? I don't think so.

On Saturday, Paul Mayasich opened at 2pm. I was not able to see Paul as I was coordinating a Blues for Kids program. Mike Fugazzi from the band Niterail graciously volunteered his time as a teacher and by the end of the afternoon, there were 71 new musicians playing their new free harmonicas.

By the time I completed my Blues for Kids obligations, the second band, the Shufflin' Duprees was starting their second set. As the band website says, "We are a La Crosse, WI based band that wants you to have a good time with some of that Old School Blues, some of that Shufflin' Blues, some of that Soul Blues AND of course, some of our own fine blends of R&B, Funk, and Rock." ...and yes, we did have a good time. I had not seen these fine musicians before and look forward to next time.

Saturday night closed with 2 sets by favorite Scottie Miller with his full band. Alas, the end had to come and who better to close out than Scottie. I feel like dancing just remembering the show.

I know my plan for next year! Get there early, camp in the wonderful camping area and load up on food and beer. If the event and the music is half as good as this year, it will be a success!