

Design clues for making your brand visible

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The saying goes “You are what you eat ...” Are eating and drinking establishments what their signs suggest? We took a tour of Third Ward bars and restaurants to find out. Signs bring in customers—do the following signs attract the desired clientele? You be the judge. We gave a “Thumbs Up” to those we thought did the best job.



1. Swig Restaurant, 217 N. Broadway

A bit Spartan looking, but that also makes for a clean look. Rust-orange awnings and umbrellas match the brick color. Clientele ranges from “ladies who lunch” to funky hipster couples. The lettering on the sign has a lot of movement which doesn't quite match the austere façade of industrial brick.



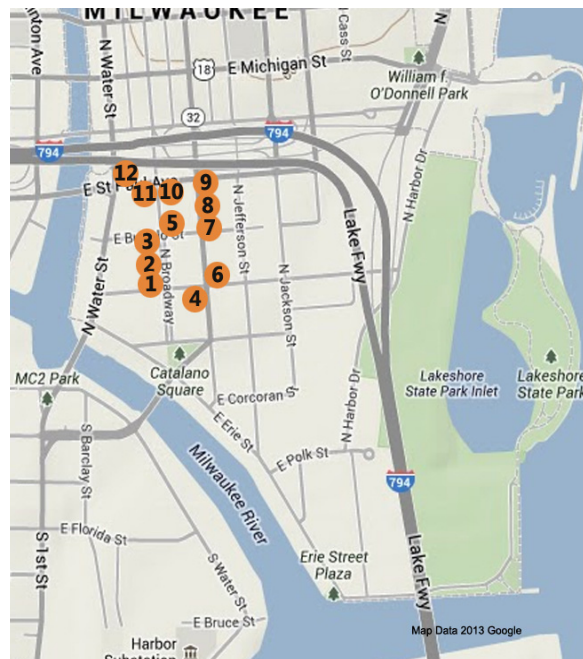
2. Bourbon & Tunns Tavern Bar/Restaurant, 221 N. Broadway

The sign says tavern but the appearance is nicer than your typical tavern. Red brick with neatly painted green trim and old world wrought iron fixtures – very carefully thought out and put together. The look says upscale drinkers. (Tip: Put the waitress in a uniform!)



3. Kasana Café and Bistro Café/Restaurant, 241 N. Broadway

Great job on the exterior décor (the aqua colored chairs and t-shirts on the waitresses match the aqua in the Third Ward street posts - even the teacup flowerpots are aqua) but no professional sign, just a handwritten sidewalk sign. Very confusing - can't figure out what and where it is. Consequently, few customers. Trying to cut corners? Shouldn't have cut a professional sign.



Bars and Restaurants observed:

- 1 Swig, 217 N. Broadway
- 2 Bourbon & Tunns Tavern, 221 N. Broadway
- 3 Kasana Café and Bistro, 241 N. Broadway
- 4 Bella Caffe, 189 N. Milwaukee St.
- 5 Hudson Business Lounge, 310 E. Buffalo St.
- 6 Kanpai, 408 E. Chicago St.
- 7 Coquette Café, 316 N. Milwaukee St.
- 8 Milwaukee Cupcake Company, 316 N. Milwaukee St.
- 9 Smoke Shack, 332 N. Milwaukee St.
- 10 Benelux Grand Café, 346 N. Broadway
- 11 The Wicked Hop, 345 N. Broadway
- 12 Milwaukee Public Market, 400 N. Water St.



**4. Bella Caffe
Coffee House, 189 N. Milwaukee St.**

Nice decor in keeping with coffeehouse/café feeling. Housed in a historically registered building and tastefully done. The hanging sign in elegant script writing and flowerpots give the “café” feeling. The entrance is on the corner and inset, so when approaching from Milwaukee street it’s hard to see the sign behind the huge marble pillar. A large bright neon “Open” sign above the door compensates.



**6. Kanpai
Restaurant, 408 E. Chicago St.**

This restaurant could be mistaken for being out of business. The staves of wood behind glass windows convey an abandoned building and the avant garde sign looks like recently done graffiti. Someone seriously miscalculated here: Even the “Now Open” sign is in Japanese. Does your average American customer read Japanese?



**5. Hudson Business Lounge
Lounge/Coffee House, 310 E. Buffalo St.**

Business-like in appearance. The exterior is meticulously restored and looks somewhat like an old-fashioned newspaper building. The interior is streamlined and contemporary. Calling it a “business lounge” is part of the “cool factor”.



**7. Coquette Café
Restaurant, 316 N. Milwaukee St.**

Resting on its laurels. The physical sign is in good repair but everything else on the exterior is going to seed. Even the café curtains look tired and dingy. Maybe this is deliberate – all part of the authentic French café look? Hard to tell – could go either way.



**8. Milwaukee Cupcake Company
Specialty Bakery, 316 N. Milwaukee St.**

Same address as Coquette Café but this side of the building entrance has a completely different feel and look. The sign is bright and fresh. The windows aren’t great looking but are in good repair (unlike Coquette’s.) Everything is in pretty, bright colors that say “Come on in!”



**9. Smoke Shack
Restaurant, 332 N. Milwaukee St.**



This one wins “Best of Show”! Absolutely first rate. Everything on the outside (including the signage) is very carefully calculated to look like an old, broken-down smoke shack in the Wisconsin hinterlands, but look closer: All is clean and repaired and in tip-top condition. Also, the appearance has been carefully coordinated so that nothing is off-putting despite the dilapidated decor. No skimping and it seems to be paying off; it has capacity crowds.

**10. Benelux Café
Market/Café, 346 N. Broadway**



Nice, clean, and kept up. Bright red geraniums coordinate with the rooster sign and the Hens and Chicks Cacti are clever and cute, but the rooftop palms don't fit. Signage is carved in wood which coordinates with the planters.



**11. The Wicked Hop
Bar/Restaurant, 345 N. Broadway**



The sign physically illustrates the name – flames carved in metal stretch across the roofline. The metal is rusted but everything is in good repair, so it's probably deliberate. With a rusty metal roof, dull brick and drab brown metal chairs and tables, this is not a bright and friendly décor. This is cool, “wicked cool”!

**12. Milwaukee Public Market
Market/Restaurants, 400 N. Water St.**



Clean and fresh. The big red sculpture in front communicates the idea of a public place. Brightly colored umbrellas and flowers add charm but a straw roof over the sidewalk tables -- What's up with that? The building is made out of concrete block like a supermarket or factory, in keeping with the stores inside. It is what it is.