

T.G.I. FRIDAY’S USED TO BE A BAR and not a family restaurant is what I would tell people under 40 reading my “Once upon a time” essay.

It started out as a place deliberately trying to attract businesswomen. If they could get the ladies to show up for happy hour, the men would come too.

The extensive, spiral-bound drinks menu featured lots of “girly drinks” as well as beers and martinis. They served Appletinis, wine coolers, Cosmopolitans, and other things that would appeal to folks wanting to order up some fun. (I was enamored of the cream drinks such as Mudslides and Grasshoppers.)

All of the locations they built had the same square floorplan with lots of stuff on the walls and on the servers’ vests. There were three levels of seating. You could sit at the bar at the top and watch everyone come in, or get a table at the outermost, bottom level.

T.G.I. FRIDAY’S USED TO BE A PLACE and not a frozen food brand is what I say now. Most of their locations closed during the COVID-19 Lockdown, including “my” Costa Mesa location near South Coast Plaza by the San Diego Freeway.

I wish I could take you to the old T.G.I. Friday’s.