

NEWS

Tiki-themed event supports Moai restoration effort

BY WILLIAM FLOOD

COLUMBUS, Ohio — In 1961, the epic Polynesian restaurant, the Kahiki, opened in Columbus, Ohio. While tiki bars sprung up in virtually every city in that era, the Kahiki was virtually unequaled. The supper club was nearly a city block large and cost over \$1 million to build (nearly \$10 million in today's dollars).

Guests were transported to a tropical paradise, with a 40-foot-tall war-canoe-looking building as its centerpiece. Two 20-foot Moai statues graced the entrance and lit up the night with their flaming headdresses.

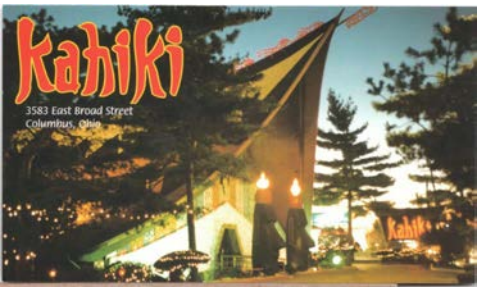
Once inside, visitors were immersed in the sights, sounds, and tastes of the South Seas. Tropical flora and bamboo created an island village atmosphere. A two-story tiki fireplace anchored one end of the building. Walls were lined with aquariums filled with tropical fish. There were even faux thunderstorms.

Their oversized illustrated cocktail menu touted dozens of potent libations



Above: A set of 12-inch Moai bookends (\$75) from the 1970s were particularly reminiscent of the statue being restored.

with names like Idol's Cast and Zombie, and a now-iconic bourbon cocktail of their invention called the Port Light. A famed "Mystery Drink" was served in a smoking volcano bowl, delivered by a



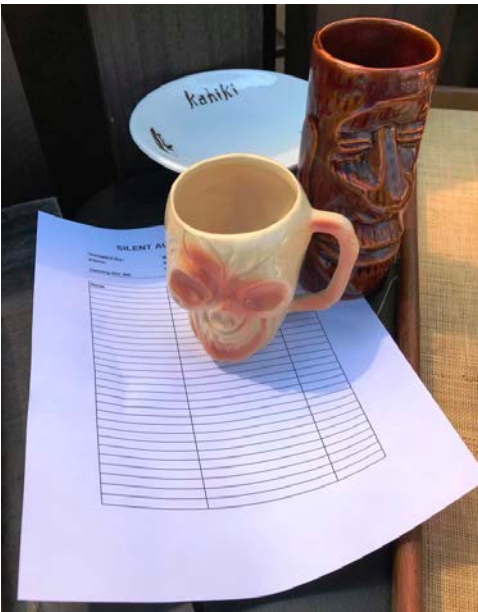
Above: This vintage postcard captures the grandeur of the Kahiki, including the huge Moai statues that graced its entrance.

"Mystery Girl" who danced her way to the table.

Cuisine leaned heavily toward Cantonese dishes, during the era when Chinese dining was still considered "exotic." Ironically, their food's popularity ultimately spelled the Kahiki's demise, when the owners shifted their energies from running the restaurants to selling frozen dinners.

The acclaim regularly drew dignitaries and celebrities including Disney's Michael Eisner, Zsa Zsa Gabor, and Bob Hope. Sadly, time and changes in taste forced the Kahiki's closure. Despite being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997, the spectacular building was razed in 2001 to make room for a Walgreens. Heartbroken locals still recount dates, graduation celebrations, and family gatherings in its enthralling setting.

The demolition was indelicate. The Left: This was the forlorn state for those illustrious Moai statues after the Kahiki was razed. One will thankfully be saved. (Photo: John Holt "Tiki Skip")



Above: Among the pieces in the silent auction was this trio of Kahiki barware. Bidding quickly exceeded \$150.

two-story tiki fireplace was craned through the roof (a video of that is still available on YouTube) and ended up in a Vermont field. Much of the furniture, dishware, and decor, went into storage and was later auctioned. The two grand statues from the entrance were salvaged but ended up damaged and derelict, weeds growing through them like junked cars.

For a dozen years, tiki was absent from Columbus, until a downtown bar, the Grass Skirt (2012-2019) did their part to revive it. The year "the Skirt" closed, on Columbus' north side, local coffee bar owner Dustin Sun decided to

SEE KAHIKI RESTAURANT PAGE 4

Don't throw in the towel, use it as a statement piece instead

Perhaps you remember that advertisement for a credit card, the one that ended with the admonishment, "Don't leave home without it." Or maybe you've seen the signs (or have one posted by your back door) that remind you "Phone? Wallet? Keys?" But if you ever happen to find yourself as the last person on Earth, you'd best heed the advice of author Douglas Adams, who made it clear in "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" that a towel is "about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitchhiker can have." Turns out, though, that even if you don't have plans to leave Mother Earth, a towel is a rather nice thing to have around the house.

The first celebration of "Towel Day" was on May 25, 2001, thereby marking the two-week anniversary of Adams' passing. Ever since, the tradition has continued, not every fortnight, but annually, on May 25, as fans of the comic science fiction writer, in his

VINTAGE STYLE

BY BARBARA BEEM

honor, wear a towel around their necks. But if you ask me, this is a good excuse to celebrate towels, incorporating them with vintage style into everyday life.

When thinking about towels, my first thought was pretty obvious: Frame special towels and hang them on the wall. Select those towels that have a special meaning, those from a favorite vacation spot, or ones that are just too special to use (say, a kitchen towel that pictures the album cover of The Beatles' "Abbey Road"). Works for me.

Feeling crafty? With some basic sewing skills, it's easy to whip up linen towels, transforming them into pillow shams, table runners, and tote bags. But surely there has to be more.

Deciding to go bicoastal, I took this as an excuse to check in with two friends of "Vintage Style," both of whom are (very) active members of

SEE DON'T THROW IN THE TOWEL PAGE 5



Above: Towels can serve a variety of purposes. This one, picturing Dagwood Bumstead, is sure to bring a smile to fans of "Blondie." (Image courtesy of Jimmie Bucci)

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# Don't Throw In The Towel

FROM PAGE 2

the Vintage Tablecloth Lovers Club. I caught up with Jimmie Bucci (who lives in Massachusetts) and Teresa Stone (in Washington).

Like other tablecloth enthusiasts, Jimmie also collects towels, primarily those made of linen, which generally have clearer, more interesting graphics, as well as a more sophisticated look, than those made of terrycloth. Instead of keeping his collection in a box, where he and his friends can't enjoy them, Jimmie displays towels throughout his house, from the kitchen (on cabinet doors) and the dining room (on the backs of chairs) to the back of the bathroom door. "They're easy to display."

Teresa agreed, noting "I think towels are especially fun since (unlike tablecloths) they are a small 'pow' graphic." Like Jimmie, she looks for ways to enjoy her favorites, including using a ladder for rotating displays. But that's not all. Because of their size, she said that they work well as valances atop a window. She noted that towels that were originally meant to be hung by a wooden dowel can easily be transformed into curtains by using a skinny tension rod instead.

In the kitchen, Teresa lines her refrigerator drawers with towels; using ones that picture veggies adds to the



Above: Enliven the smallest room in your house by hanging towels on the interior door. (Image courtesy of Jimmie Bucci)

fun. Similarly, towels with a summer-time theme make a tray bearing cold drinks extra special. While towels are a good gift, consider the environmentally friendly idea of wrapping a gift



Above: So sweet, these charming day-of-the-week towels can brighten up any home. (Image courtesy of Teresa Stone)



Above: These vintage towels add an elegant touch to any powder room. (Image courtesy of Teresa Stone)



Above: Popular in the second half of the 20th century, calendar towels such as this one are now collectable. Dating from 2008, it will once again "work" in 2036. (Image courtesy of George Auld)

in a towel, she suggested. She offered a final tip: To make her stored towels easily accessible, she organizes them by holidays.

And then there's George Auld, an "AntiqueWeek" reader who lives "north of the border" in British Columbia. Thanks to annual purchases, George now has what could be characterized as an "accidental collection," spurred on by the fact that he appreciates the convenience of having the days and months of an entire year viewed at a

glance. Unfortunately, his ritual of regularly purchasing a new linen calendar has become increasingly challenging, and so he's taken to recycling his old towels when they might be used again as calendars. Sometimes, that wait can be a lengthy one, so in the meantime, he uses them. Because in the end, it's not worth throwing in (or out) the towel because, as George agrees, the old ones really do dry better than the new ones.

Below: Imagine waking up every morning to this view, framed by a valance made from turkey red show towels. (Image courtesy of Teresa Stone)



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