

Lords of the Rings

By Jeff Girod, published April 18, 2008

You asked. We answered. We scoured Inland Southern California — everywhere from San Bernardino to Temecula, leaving no RV park unturned — to bring you the best locally grown onion rings this side of Pomona.

These joints don't have national ad campaigns, bulbous headed mascots or chintzy Happy Meal toys, just quality swaths of onion battered and deep-fried to tasty, oily perfection.

You're in Onion Country now, buster, where our rings only come in two sizes: GIANT and COLOSSAL.

GEORGE'S DRIVE-IN

Can't decide what to eat? Go to George's.

The blue-and-red iconic sign says it all: "Burgers-Tacos-Fries," and since 1974 you can order everything from polish sausage and eggs to a carnitas burrito to an avocado burger.

George's also sells the most onion rings (\$2.15) for the money, a white paper sack stuffed with moderately sized golden rings with a cereal-like crunch.

One word of caution: Eat the rings before they get cold or they might not be the only thing going "crunch!" in your mouth.

9910 Magnolia Ave., Riverside, 951-688-2471.

JAY'S GRILL AT THE IVY

Arguably the Inland's best onion rings are somewhere in the hills above Corona's Temescal Canyon exit from Interstate 15. Turn right on Glen



Ivy Road into an RV park, wind your way down past trailers, motor homes and canvas awnings, to a raucous bar and one-room joint, complete with vinyl booths.

The Sweet Beer-Battered Onion Rings are served as an appetizer (\$4.95) with more than a dozen rings and a bowl of ranch sauce.

The rings are coated in a seasoned breading that crumbles to the touch. They're salty, juicy and greasy and well worth the hunt it might take to find Jay's.

24601 Glen Ivy Road, Corona, 951-603-0096.

WAHOO'S FISH TACOS

A surfin' taco shop may not be an obvious choice, but a basket of its beer-battered Maui Onion Rings (\$2.49) is worth paddling out for.

The rings are doughy and spongier than at other places, with a hint of pastrylike sweetness.

The atmosphere at Wahoo's is as hang loose as its sticker-heavy ocean decor.

Grab a paper menu and do

your ordering at the counter.

1295 Hamner Ave., Norco, 951-270-0526; 29073 Overland Drive, Temecula, 951-694-4444; 11561 Foothill Blvd., Suite 1030, Rancho Cucamonga, 909-948-6949.

FARMER BOYS

Farmer Boys has been an Inland mainstay since its first restaurant opened in Perris in 1981.

Since then, it has expanded to 60 franchises with 38 locations in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

One of Farmer Boys' specialties is its Giant Onion Rings (\$2.39/\$2.99) made with hand-battered, breaded onions.

The rings aren't as big as depicted on billboards, with a farmer loading them into the back of a pickup, but you'll be hard-pressed to finish an inch-thick, regular-size order of seven.

For locations, log on to www.farmerboys.com

TACO TIA

Onion rings at Taco Tia are like finding buried treasure next to a Lil' Homies action-figure dispenser.

Taco Tia's rings (\$2.39) melt like butter, a grand symbiosis of onion, breading and grease.

Rings range from coaster-size down to the diameter of a silver dollar. (This is one time it's better not to share.)

2635 Del Rosa Ave., San Bernardino, 909-882-1775; 1004 Orange St., Redlands, 909-825-1579.