

## Ex-employees of Johnny Utah's suing over 'hyper-sexualized work environment'

Female workers at the Midtown hotspot were often forced to kiss each other while riding the bar's mechanical bull, a new lawsuit claims. They were also regularly intimidated if they were not 'attractive enough,' the suit claims.

BY [DAREH GREGORIAN](#) / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS / Tuesday, June 17, 2014, 7:25 PM



Whoa there!

A Wild West-themed bar in Midtown forces female employees to wear skimpy outfits, do shots with customers and make out with each other atop a notoriously dangerous mechanical bull, a bombshell lawsuit says.

In papers filed in Manhattan federal court, several former bartenders and "Daisy Duke" girls at Johnny Utah's say they were degraded on a daily basis and on special occasions like Thanksgiving, when they were required to wrestle with each other in a toddler pool filled with cranberry sauce.

The party bar is "a hyper-sexualized work environment that increases the defendants profits by exploiting, degrading and humiliating its female employees," the suit says.

"Female servers and bartenders are required to wear sexually provocative clothing, including cut-off denim shorts, cut-off shirts, cowboy boots and excessive makeup," and ordered to look sexy and "available," the suit says. They are also instructed not to wear wedding or engagement rings.

Employees also expected to sit on male customers laps, get them to buy them shots, and "dance on top of the bar in front of customers and pour shots of alcohol into customers' mouths," the suit says.

Bosses also "urge the female employees to take off their shirts when they ride the mechanical bull and kiss other female employees when they ride the bull together," says the suit, which was filed on behalf of six former employees.



Female employees at Johnny Utah's were often forced to make out with each other while riding the mechanical bull, a lawsuit claims.

"During the ride, the Johnny Utah's DJ periodically stops the music and announces over the microphone that if the female employees who are riding the bull 'make out' with each other, there will be a free round of shots of alcohol for all customers. The customers yell and scream for the female employees to kiss one another" and they are "expected to submit to the degradation," the suit says.

The women are routinely "subjected to pervasive and regular unwelcome sexual comments" and groping by male customers — and if they complain, they're not "team players."

They're also forced to do shots with the W. 51st St. bar's manager and his pals, the suit says.

"Managers frequently remind the female servers that they are expendable and tell them that '20 other women' are willing to take their job," the filing says.

They are called ugly or stupid by the male managers if they're not "throwing the party" or looking "attractive enough," the suit says.

The suit says bartenders and waitresses shouldn't be forced into titillating customers

"Johnny Utah's is in business of selling food and alcohol to the public, not providing adult entertainment to heterosexual men," the suit says.

The restaurant and bar, which is owned by John Sullivan, owner of McFadden's and Calico Jack's, had been best known for its mechanical bull, which has spawned several personal injury lawsuits over the years.

"That's the least of its problems," said the workers' lawyer, Jeanne Christensen.

The bar did not return a call for comment.

The class action lawsuit seeks unspecified money damages for female employees past and present.