



BEHIND THE Bar

The Secret's Out about
Akron's Northside Speakeasy.

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Guests gather around a semi-circular bar, engaging in easy banter with each other and with the two bartenders, who also engage in substantial showmanship preparing the cocktails. More than once they stand side by side shaking the drinks as if in some sort of bartending duel. Elsewhere in the intimate establishment, guests sit on the patio, lounge on couches and easy chairs, or sit in booths where curtains can be drawn for privacy, all while a soundtrack of soulful blues is playing.

Welcome to the Northside Speakeasy inside the Courtyard by Marriott near downtown Akron, where the nods to the illicit gathering places of the Prohibition era include the two entrances — a bright red phone booth that gives access to the hotel lobby and a simulated “newsstand” facing the outside, where guests push on a wall of shelves to gain entry. The drinks served here are far from the bootleg whiskey or bathtub gin of yesteryear. One regular customer loudly proclaims: “This is the best place for craft cocktails in Akron!”

Indeed, The Ginger Murphy — made with Jameson Irish Whiskey mixed with lemon and ginger shrubs, ginger simple syrup, and lemon bitters — could safely



Enter through the phone booth.



Explore new cocktails from the inventive menu.



be described as a flavor explosion. A large, perfectly rounded ball of ice floats on top. A guest declares her cocktail — the End to End, made with Booker's bourbon, Domaine de Canton liqueur, orange juice, Luxardo cherries, bitters, and ginger simple syrup — is a “bona fide masterpiece.”

Most of these inventive cocktails are the brainchild of mixologist Bryan Burns, who's been putting his own spin on classic cocktails for more than two decades. Burns loves preparing drinks with imaginative twists, like a Manhattan made with almond syrup or his version of a Bee's Knees that adds Turbinado sugar to a mixture of Hendrick's Gin, honey, and lemon juice. Burns' Gin Rickey calls for simple syrup mixed with Watershed Bourbon Barrel Gin, lime, and soda, and his tribute to the classic cocktail Nuts and Berries adds butterscotch to a blend of Baileys, Chambord, Frangelico, and cream.

Imaginative preparations supplement the creative cocktails at the Northside Speakeasy. Drinks containing absinthe have the spirit spritzed instead of poured inside the glass. Elaborate designs, many using chocolate syrup, are “drawn” atop several cocktails. And most dramatic of all, a cylinder of butane fuel is carefully used to torch orange and grapefruit peels to add

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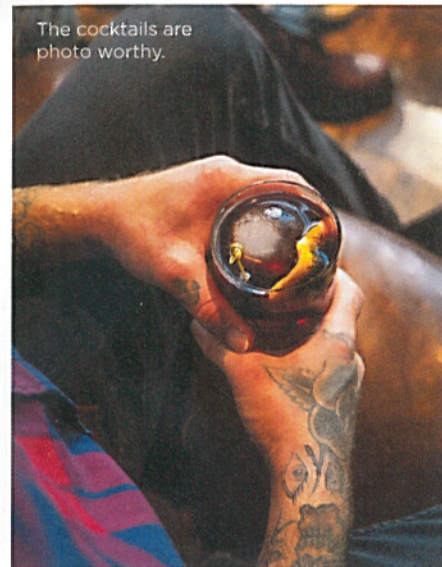


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The cocktails are photo worthy.



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a charred flavor to cocktails. It's all part of the show that the guests enjoy as they watch their cocktails being prepared.

Of course, classics like Old Fashioned, Sazerac, Whiskey Sour, and Tom Collins can be ordered, and rest assured that all ingredients are fresh — all syrups, shrubs, and infusions are made in-house, and all fruit is squeezed on the spot. Get creative. Bartenders are prepared to custom make cocktails to your specifications.

A guest who wanted a “dessert-y” type of drink had one prepared that contained Kahlua and cream as well as hazelnut and raspberry liqueurs.

Alas, master mixologist Bryan Burns left Akron to return to his native California at the end of July, but his legacy will live on in the form of dozens of recipes, all safely tucked away in a little box chock full of index cards. And Tevin Edwards, who's worked side by side with Burns since 2016,

acknowledges that he has learned the art of cocktail preparation from an artisan at the top of his craft. Look for Edwards to continue preparing those in-demand drinks currently in rotation but to add a few twists of his own. “I'm ready to spread my wings and take our cocktail list in some new directions,” he acknowledged. No doubt they'll be the showstoppers that patrons at the Northside Speakeasy have come to expect. 🍹

not-so-secret cocktails

Make these Northside Speakeasy drinks at home.



ALMONDHATTAN

- 2 oz. rye whiskey
- 1 oz. sweet vermouth
- 1/2 oz. soda water
- 1/4 oz. Luxardo cherry juice
- 1/4 oz. Orgeat almond liqueur
- 3 dashes Angostura bitters
- 2 Luxardo cherries

Pour rye whiskey, vermouth, cherry juice, and almond liqueur into mixing glass. Splash soda water and stir. Pour over ice in an Old Fashioned glass. Garnish with Luxardo cherries.

YE OLDE PEPPER MILL

- 2 oz. rye whiskey
- 1/4 oz. Luxardo cherry juice
- 1 1/2 oz. blackberry liqueur
- 12 cranks of a pepper mill
- 1 orange
- 2 Luxardo cherries

Pour blackberry liqueur, rye whiskey, and cherry juice into a mixing glass. Add pepper and fresh squeezed orange juice. Pour over ice in an Old Fashioned glass. Garnish with burnt orange peel and Luxardo cherries.

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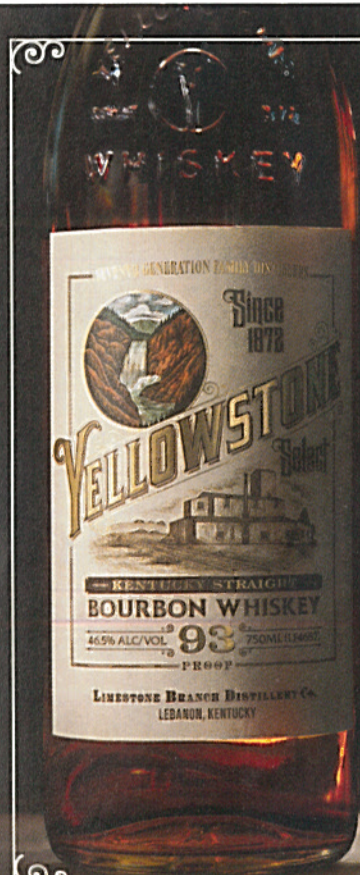
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