

BEHIND THE BAR



Owners Terri and Rick Hume

Beyond the Bear Necessities

The Hungry Bear Pub and Grill Offers a Vermont Welcome

Visitors to the Hungry Bear Pub and Grill in Bradford are often taken by the immediate sense of comfort when they step inside. It's no accident.

"We put a lot of time and effort into the appearance and the feel you get when you come in," Owner Rick Hume says. "It's very warm with a lot of natural wood and indirect, low lighting."

Hume, a onetime commercial artist, used his background and expertise to bring a sense of community and belonging to the restaurant, which has been in operation since 1971. He and his wife, Terri, bought the Hungry Bear – a onetime car-hop style establishment – in 1991, and revamped the Bradford landmark in 2004 to make it a pub and grill.

"It's a horseshoe-shaped bar, which lends itself to conversation," Hume says. "We wanted to

emphasize comfort, camaraderie and a friendly atmosphere. People often comment on the warmth of the atmosphere when they come in."

It's an atmosphere that accommodates all different walks of life, Hume says. Wander in and you'll likely see professionals in suits sitting next to trade workers, tourists and locals.

"It was designed to fit everybody's idea of comfort," he says. "It's got a very welcoming, pub feeling. It's very socially comfortable. And we have people in coat in ties and people who are young professionals that might be in a trade. We seem to get people that are up and moving."

Though he's now partially retired, Hume spent many nights behind the bar, and provided 802 Spirits with some insight into his life in the restaurant.

What was your first night behind the bar like?

Rick Hume: Scary as hell – that's the long and the short of it. You're afraid you're not going to look the part, you're afraid you're not going to keep up. It's hard to train a bartender standing next to a bartender. You can teach them how to hold a bottle, you can teach them bartender traits, you can teach them things they should be doing, but I think until you're comfortable with it, it's difficult. Treating a person right is easy and being friendly is easy – or it should be an easy part of it. The harder part is remembering everything you're supposed to be doing, especially if you have a full bar. In the beginning, it's timing, getting around and being fast enough not to spend an inordinate amount of time on one drink and leave people standing



Bartender Deanna Rogers

with empty glass. Of course, if you do, they'll let you know it.

What's your favorite part of working behind the bar?

RH: It was fun to see the regulars come in and have the normal conversations about the Red Sox. I'm in the middle of Patriots country, but I've always been a Redskins fan – so we'd go back and forth on that stuff. It was fun to be there, doing that. Of course, it could get hectic. Being a good bartender is hard because you have to be able to manage social side and the business side of it too. You have to make sure you're not caught up in conversation when you should be pouring drinks.

What was your favorite cocktail to make?

RH: It's called a Smoked Manhattan. It's difficult to make and keep going with your work. If you're busy you couldn't do this. It's a type of Manhattan where you use a piece of a charred oak barrel and you burn it. You have a little torch and you sit there with the blue flame over it. It burns, and then you pop a glass over it to capture the smoke. Also, I use almond

bitters with it instead of regular bitters and maker's mark. Then you flame an orange peel to burn off the oils, put that in it and serve it in a tumbler – a taller glass with an ice cube. It's a really cool thing and they're really good.

What advice would you give aspiring bartenders?

SD: I would say pay more attention to your customers in general and enjoy conversation – but keep it light. Here's the big thing about a good bartender: you're the priest and they're coming to you to discuss their problems. Don't ever discuss your problems, let them discuss theirs.

What's a cocktail that's particularly popular at The Hungry Bear?

SD: The most popular cocktails year-round are the sour apple and raspberry margaritas. You start with your basic margarita made from scratch – triple sec and the normal things you'd put in a margarita – but then we have these flavors you add to it after that make them special. For summer time, one of our most popular cocktails is Sweet Poison. It's very simple and beautiful because it's layered. ☺



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Sweet Poison

Courtesy The Hungry Bear Pub and Grill

- 1 ounce rum
- 2 ounces coconut rum
- 1 ounce blue curacao
- 3 ounces pineapple juice
- Pineapple wedge
- Cherry

Pour 1 ounce of blue curacao in bottom of glass prior to icing. Then, ice the glass and fill with the pineapple juice, rum and coconut rum - shaken. Pour it over the blue curacao and garnish with a pineapple wedge and a cherry.