

BEHIND THE BAR



Billy and Heather Mossinghoff

Bring on the Bacon

Brewster River Pub and Brewery 4087 Route 108, Jeffersonville • (802) 644-6366
brewsterriverpubnbrewery.com

Billy Mossinghoff enjoyed his job when he started working at the former Brewster River Pub and Grille in 2002, but even then he had his eyes on something bigger.

The Vermont transplant, who was lured north via the ski bug, knew that one day he wanted to own a restaurant just like the one he began working in 14 years ago. Coincidentally, that same eatery came up for sale in 2008.

"The previous owners didn't want to run a pub anymore so we took it over," Mossinghoff says from the dining room of the now-renamed Brewster River Pub and Brewery. The "we," in this case is the 42-year-old Florida native and his wife, Heather.

"I absolutely knew I wanted to own it one day," Mossinghoff says. "This particular place was in my mind. We worked here, I used to hang out here – it's right at the base of Smugler's Notch and it's always busy. It's a great community and we have a good time here."

Mossinghoff and his wife took over the restaurant and brought a new focus: burgers, barbecue and beer. The Mossinghoffs also run a brewery on-site. And though he oversees everything as the owner, he still takes shifts behind the bar during the busy season.

Why did you first become a bartender?

"The money was good, but it was mostly about the camaraderie – the communication between the patrons and learning the ropes. I loved interacting with people. I'm a people person and I like to tell jokes, so that's what drew me to it. I worked at a place called The Elbo Room on Fort Lauderdale Beach. I went to college at the University of Pittsburgh and I worked at a brewery there, too."

What's your bar program philosophy?

"The menu is constantly changing. We do a lot of syrups and infusions, so when we run out we go on to the next thing. We are always experimenting. We'll come up with something and I'll try it out on myself or the employees. Syrups are the best way to flavor cocktails, and we make them all – pumpkin for the fall, strawberry, raspberry – we've tried anything you can put in simple syrup.

"We started doing a thyme and lavender infusion syrup and we used it with Green Mountain Lemon Vodka. We'd use that syrup and garnish it with thyme and called it a Lavender and Thyme Lemonade. It was so popular that we kept it on the menu."

Share a behind-the-bar secret.

"Smile. Always smile. And be ready to experiment."

What's your favorite cocktail?

"It's got to be our Bacon Bourbon Manhattan. My bartender Jake Lehouiller came up with the idea for that. We cook a lot of bacon here, and we'd normally let the bacon fat solidify and then throw it away. He thought we could take the bacon fat and infuse it into bourbon. So we put it into mason jars with the bourbon and let it sit for a week. We'd freeze it, and then poke a hole in it and let the bourbon pour out. We poured it into a snifter, smelled it – it had a great, smoky bacon aroma. So we sweetened it up by using it in a Manhattan and it worked out nice. We use bacon salt around the rim, which is basically crushed-up bacon, and we use Knob Creek Bourbon. If you like bacon, it's a really good drink." ☺



Maple Bacon Manhattan

2½ ounces bacon-infused bourbon
¾ ounce Vermont maple syrup
(instead of sweet vermouth)
2 dashes bitters

Add ingredients and ice to a mixing glass and stir (do not shake). Rim half a Manhattan glass with bacon salt and pour into glass. Serve either up or on the rocks.

To infuse bourbon:

We take bacon fat, add 1/3 cup to a 16 ounce Ball jar and fill with 100 proof Knob creek and infuse for at least 7 days. Put Ball jar in freezer after infusion – the bacon fat will freeze, but the bourbon won't. Poke a hole in the fat, which will be on top, and pour bourbon thru strainer. A coffee filter works best.

For bacon salt:

Cook bacon in the oven on a grate over a sheet pan so bacon does not cook in its own fat (it stays drier this way.) Process bacon in food processor until very fine. Use a 3-to-1 bacon to salt ratio.

Written by Bill Burke | Photography by Matthew Thorsen