

BEHIND THE BAR



The Creamery Carries on Vermont Traditions

The Creamery Restaurant • 46 Hill St, Danville • (802) 684-3616

Bar Manager Ami Wright

It's a typical Tuesday night at the Creamery Restaurant in Danville, and Ami Wright is mixing drinks for a crowd of regulars. In fact, she started building the cocktails before the group even walked through the door.

Catching a glimpse of patrons pulling up to the well-known spot was all the information the longtime bartender needed. It's a skill that comes with experience.

"You know everybody's car, so when you see them drive in you know what they're going to have," she says.

Wright first stepped behind the bar more than 20 years ago to supplement her office job and because "paying the rent and buying clothes is fun," she says, tongue planted firmly in cheek.



I like socializing. I like listening to customers and talking to them. It's kind of like 'Cheers.' You get to know what people like to drink.



That first shift, she says, was bewildering and intimidating. A few nights in, however, it all changed.

"I was barely 19 and I didn't really know how to make drinks," she says. "I was fumbling along, but within a couple of days it turned into fun."

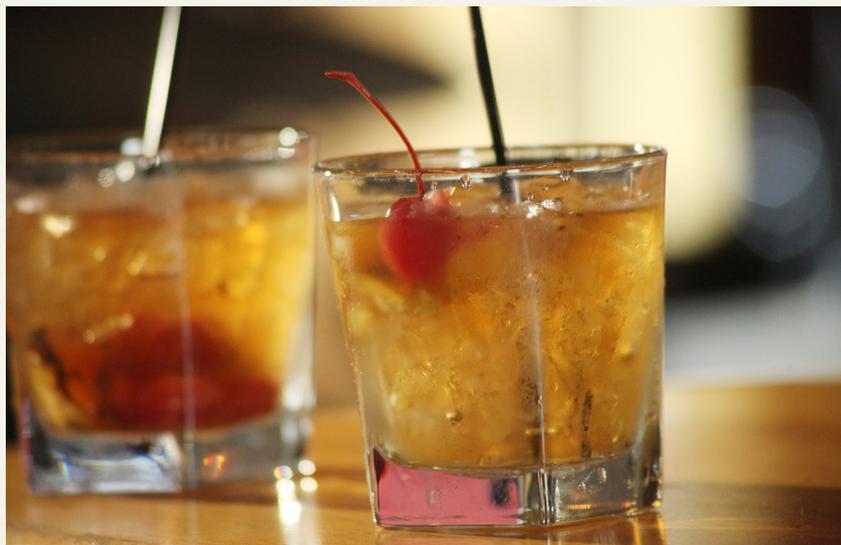
As she became more skilled, she enjoyed it more, and worked at it for several years. But then life – and three kids – intervened, and mixing drinks took a back seat for a time. After a two decade break, and with children now grown, she decided to pick it all up once again.

"I came back to it when my kids grew up because it gave me something to do. My husband works long hours, so going home at 4:30 and sitting alone for long hours is boring – so I went back to it."

She's now been back behind the sticks at The Creamery for nearly six years. The restaurant, which counts loyal locals as well as leaf-peepers, skiers and travelers among its clientele, was at one time an actual creamery.

"Lots of people think we serve ice cream,"

Written by Bill Burke
Photography by Matthew Thorsen



Burnt Orange Manhattan

2 ounces Maker's Mark bourbon
 ½ ounce sweet vermouth
 1 dash bitters
 ½ sliced singed orange half

Put all ingredients into a shaker, shake and pour over ice (if wanted) and garnish with a burned orange. To burn the orange: Singe it over open flame on the stove. It releases the oils and makes quite a citrus aroma.

Wright says. "We do, for dessert, but that's not our main thing."

This longtime Danville destination has been known as a go-to for great food and outstanding service for more than four decades. Menu items, which change regularly, range from appetizers like tangy chicken wings and spring rolls to shrimp and smoked salmon. Entrees include steak, fresh fish, pasta and even some barbecue – all served in a setting that's both conversational and intimate. Linen tablecloths and silver give it a comfortably formal feel.

At the bar, expect fresh. Fruit is cut daily, Wright uses "the best sour mix," and small-batch bloody Mary mix takes precedence over national brands.

What makes The Creamery a special place?

"The owner has been the one single owner for more than 40 years. She makes all of our soups homemade every day. She knows everyone who has ever walked through the door and never forgets a face or name, so the owner – Marion is what makes this place special."

What do you like most about the job?

"I like socializing. I like listening to customers and talking to them. In this specific restaurant, all of the customers are locals or are summer pond people so we know everybody. It's kind of like 'Cheers.' You get to know what people like to drink."

Share a behind the bar secret.

"No. Bartenders and servers are like doctors and lawyers – we're not allowed to tell secrets. There are no secrets here. We live in the town of Danville, there are no secrets. I don't think you can get away with anything.

"Here's a tip, though: Pour without measuring but never over-pour. You learn to count. It pays to be good at that. Measuring takes a lot of time. You can save time and money because if you can do that without pouring over, you're saving money all the way around."

What's your favorite cocktail to make and why?

"Either a Cosmopolitan or a Manhattan because those are my two favorite drinks. My least favorite cocktail to make is a rum punch or a Long Island Iced Tea. There are too many ingredients, it's too time consuming and there's too much shaking."

At the end of a shift, I...

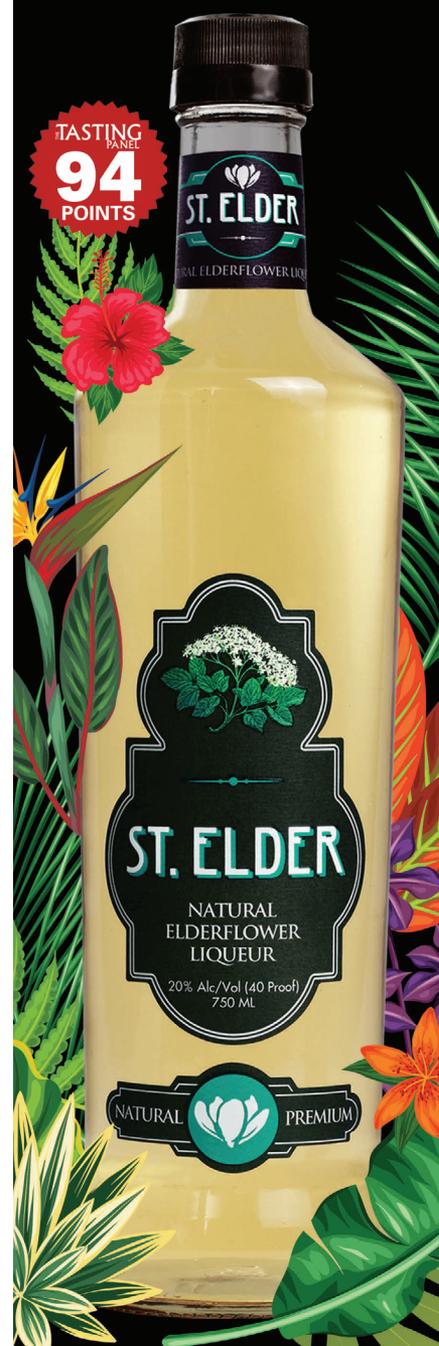
"I think about the customers. Like, how I loved that table that came in in the left hand corner, they were so polite and so funny and so sweet."

What advice would you give aspiring bartenders?

"Be patient. Do not let anyone get you flustered – you can only work as quickly as you can." 🍸

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