

Butch + Babe's: O.N.E. Way to Celebrate Vermont

Dine at Butch + Babe's, and you're likely to learn something about Burlington, because a meal at this Old North End eatery comes with a side of a story composed by Owner Kortnee Bush and her team.

Bush grew up in Chicago, but has embraced all things Old North End since coming to Vermont — a duality made evident in the restaurant's creative, comforting, eclectic offerings. The menu changes regularly based on seasonal recipes inspired by family, and tells a story about the owner's family, but also about the city's neighborhood. There's comfort, but there's also a sustainable ethos; classic Midwestern fare, but with a Green Mountain twist.

"We approach the menu from the ground

up," Bar Manager Matt Folts says. "Everything is meant to be funky and out of the box. We like to use a lot of local ingredients and play on classic things — to give it our own twist."

A number of items carry a Midwest influence from Bush's upbringing. The Chicago Dog (onion, relish, pickled pepper, tomato and celery salt) transports to the Windy City, but from there, things get deliciously unusual. The Elote Corndog (cornmeal, smoked onion, jalapeno 'magic sauce' and cotijo cheese), the Kimchee Dog (sweet chili mayo) and the Falafel Dog (housemade falafel, tzatziki, onion and tomato) showcase the restaurant's creative approach to the classic.

Big, pleasing flavors run through the entire

menu, ranging from Hot Dog Mac + Cheese Pancakes with habanero maple syrup and Major Tso's Cauliflower with jasmine rice, house pickles and maple peanuts, to House Fried Chicken with Vermont BBQ sauce and Mom's Local Southwest Salad. Then there's the Vermont narrative-in-a-glass, related via its beers and ciders and an invitingly creative bar program. A selection of vegan offerings — Blistered Shishitos with maple sweet chili sauce, for example — complete the Butch + Babe's story.

The L-shaped bar itself has three high-tops and 15 seats. It's a subdued space that recreates the comfortable feeling throughout the rest of Butch + Babe's. And that's where Folts comes in. As bar manager, he's helped craft the cocktail menu with assistance from the owner and the team of three bartenders. From the Drop it Like it's Hot, made with cinnamon-infused toasted chili tequila, and the vegan-friendly Mini Cocussian made with coconut milk, to the ode-to-Burlington's Old North End: O.N.E. Sour, Folts' team has made its mark on the menu.

"The bar is pretty laid back," Folts says. "It's not formal, not a sports bar — just pretty chill. It's like the overall vibe of the restaurant. It's meant to make you feel like you're at home."

What was your first night behind the bar like?

Folts: "I kind of got thrown into the fire, to be honest. I trained for three shifts and then I was thrown into my first full shift on a Friday night. It was absolutely insane. But having previously worked on a kitchen line, it came to be second nature as far as managing the chaos. It was crazy but I got through it. It's actually a good way to learn. I try to recommend it to people I train."

What do you like most about your job?

"A lot of it goes back to being a cook. I enjoy having the knowledge of food and flavoring. Cooking and bartending are very hand in hand as far as knowing what works best together. Balancing a drink is very similar to balancing a plate of food. And I like using seasonal ingredients and being creative when mixing drinks."



Bar Manager Matt Folts



O.N.E. Sour

courtesy Butch + Babe's

- 1 ounce bourbon (or rye)
- ¾ ounce Cynar 70 proof
- ½ ounce habanero honey
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- Lemon

Pour the bourbon and Cynar into a glass. Add the habanero honey and bitters, garnish with a lemon and serve.

Who creates your drink recipes?

"All of the bartenders here, for the most part. Between myself and the rest of the staff, I really enjoy collaborating on that. We've got three bartenders on when were fully-staffed, and we all collaborate."

If you weren't a bartender, what would you be?

"I think I'd be cooking or going to school. I learned to cook through working at restaurants. I wouldn't say I'm good at any one style of food, in particular, but I do enjoy barbecue and smoking meat. And I'm really good at making sauces. I also once owned a taco delivery business in Burlington called Underground Taco. My buddy Taylor and I ran it. I'd be out delivering tacos by bike until 3 a.m."

What's your best advice for someone getting ready for a career behind the bar?

"If I was to share one tip to a new bartender, it would be to always set yourself up for success. Have everything you need at your fingertips. The time you spend reaching into a cooler to grab one thing will add up on a busy night, and it could eventually send you off swimming in the weeds. Also strive to keep a clean and tidy bar. Clean and reset whenever you have a free moment! And always listen to your heart." ☘

Butch + Babe's

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