



FIRESTONE'S CULINARY TAVERN

FIRESTONE'S GRAND OLD FREDERICK BUILDING
STILL FANS CUSTOMERS' FLAMES

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The building that houses Firestone's Culinary Tavern in Frederick dates back to 1921. That was a noteworthy year both nationally and internationally. Adolf Hitler quietly became the Fuhrer of the Nazi Party in July. The Republic of Ireland won its independence in

December. Albert Einstein won the Nobel Prize for Physics. Notable births included Rodney Dangerfield, John Glenn, Alex Haley, Gene Roddenberry, Jane Russell, and Lana Turner. And the world first started eating Cheez-Its, Baby Ruth candy bars, and white Wonder Bread.

Keelin Mallory
General Manager
Firestone's Culinary Tavern



Firestone's didn't start out as an eating and drinking establishment. It was Shipley's Department Store, serving the good folks of Frederick all of their apparel and other retail needs. If you walk into the tavern today, you can see how this used to be a multi-level store at one point in its existence.

General Manager Keelin Mallory feels the interior is one of Firestone's best features. "I love the layout of the restaurant," she said during a recent interview with the Beverage Journal. "We go up four levels, and we still have the original tin ceilings. They're just gorgeous. There is a mezzanine level that holds our dining room. It looks down over our bar, and it makes for a gorgeous overall layout."

Mallory and her staff unfortunately can't use all four levels because of the building's historic standing that makes it not possible to support an elevator. "There is a LOT of red tape!" Mallory exclaims.

But what they can use and build off of is a reputation of offering great customer service and a fun and nostalgic atmosphere. Mallory stated. "We pride ourselves on being a neighborhood tavern that has good food and good, strong drinks! We are also welcoming



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"The Bourbon Bar is definitely a selling point among drinkers in Frederick County and upper Montgomery County. A bit more laid back, it is indeed an extension of the Culinary Tavern."

to everybody, not just our locals."

With regards to Firestone's beverage offerings, Mallory was quick to note the tavern is both liquor- and beer-focused. "About a year and a half ago, we started up our Bourbon Bar next door in our Sidecar Room. This is an attached building. For our beverage program itself, we open it up to any employee who is interested in creating cocktails. We like to get a lot of input from the staff themselves. Anybody who is interested in making a drink is welcome to do so. We'll workshop it with whoever's around at the moment. They get to name the drink. And, yes, a lot of times, they assign their name or nickname to it. We've often come away with something quite delicious."

The Bourbon Bar is definitely a selling point among drinkers in Frederick County and upper Montgomery County. A

bit more laid back, it is indeed an extension of the Culinary Tavern. Customers can enjoy full access to the tavern's menu in a more intimate setting than the full restaurant next door. A large selection of frequently unique bourbon whiskeys is on permanent display, providing a cool backdrop to the overall space.

While the drink selection is often cited as customers' favorite thing about Firestone's, Mallory says she agrees with those customers who most enjoy the friendly

and knowledgeable staff. "The favorite part of my job is having such a great staff," she added. "We have a long-time staff generally. Our hires tend to stick around for quite a while, so I get to watch people grow. Kids will start with us when they're 16, and you get to see them turn into people. It's really neat and something I've come to appreciate. Most move on, but they come back and visit."

Mallory herself started at Firestone's when she was a teenager and worked there until she was 21. She moved away to Maine for eight years, but came back and served again for a year before taking over as general manager.

During her tenure, she has faced her fair share of challenges. Chief among them, of course, has been the pandemic. "There are still a lot of things lingering from COVID that





people didn't get over," she observed. "But I find it fun to still be so flexible with it all. QR menus are one of the changes that has stuck around. We generally print menus, as well. But we are able to change our drink lists immediately, especially if we run out of something. It gives us way more flexibility. There are still a few lingering distribution problems. So, if you can't get something, then you just change it online and it immediately goes into action."

Speaking of lingering problems, Firstone's is similar to other historic bars, restaurants, and taverns profiled in this column in that there has been rumored paranormal activity on site over the years. "Absolutely!" exclaimed Mallory. "Especially on those upper levels. A lot of our dry goods are up there. And going up there late at night can be a bit creepy. We don't really have names for any of our ghosts. But there have been a lot of flickering lights

and a LOT of bumps in the night!"

So, does Mallory have advice for anyone reading this who is currently managing an historic or prestige bar or restaurant or aspires to manage such a place one day? "Be flexible. Be willing to change and listen to your staff. They are the ones who talk to every guest who comes through the building. So, generally, they know more than you do!" ■

