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Pour man's therapist

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In Ames, there is no shortage of places to get some drinks after a long day. Each bar offers different deals, drinks and atmospheres, but one thing that people often overlook in the search for a bar is the most vital to getting a drink: the bartender.

Most bars have several different bartenders, and while you may see them just a few times in one night, they see patrons seeking elixirs tens to hundreds of times in any given day. Although the bars on Welch may be the most crowded, the college bar scene isn't for everyone. For people like that, there is no need to worry — here are some places to find alcoholic drinks with different atmospheres.

Right off of Iowa State's campus is a bar that looks about the size of a garage from the outside, but fits several tables, the bartop, and multiple pool and foosball tables to keep the customers entertained.

Thumbs is still a narrow bar, but that doesn't seem to scare off any of the guests. There is never a bar seat empty, and for the spare second that someone leaves a table or stool, another person is already in line to grab it when they can.

Henry Kaufmann is the man serving drinks. He banters with the regulars, one of which happens to be a dog who has had a rough day of his own.

"We are just off the beaten track. I would say we are more dive-y, more of a neighborhood style than the other bars. We can change someone's whole perspective on the bar scene," says Kaufmann.

Kaufmann believes that each bar has its own essence. He has bartended for other bars in Ames and says that what sets Thumbs apart is how both staff and patrons feel like family. He credits the bar for being laid back, or what some would call a "dead-head bar."

When Kaufmann isn't on the clock, his favorite drink is called a "fast eddie", which is Deep Eddy's Grapefruit vodka and soda.

Across the street from Thumbs is another bar named Mother's Pub. Like Superman's two identities, Mother's is a coffee shop by day and a bar by night. Inside this bar is Alita Carpenter, who is practicing flipping bottles as a way to awe customers.

What Carpenter loves most about her career is the people. "I love talking to people, getting to know them, and hearing about their experiences. It's a job, but it's also a way for me to get out of my routine of going to class. I get the opportunity to meet locals and experience Ames vicariously through them."

Carpenter's favorite drink to make is anything with triple sec. Unfortunately, this order happens less frequently than she would like.

"Fireball is extremely overrated," Carpenter says, "but college students love it. Why would you take a shot of spicy cinnamon when you could get something fun that doesn't burn?"

Carpenter would rather have a customer ask for spoonful of cinnamon for the cinnamon challenge than fireball.

If you are looking to remove yourself a little further from campus, on the other side of Ames is another bar, a bit darker with a telephone booth and several homages to England on the walls. At the London Underground, people lean in at the bars or choose a secluded window seat at the front, watching each customer walk in the door.

It is impossible for someone to be a regular here and not have had their drink poured by Mara Spooner, who's worked at the London Underground for 10 years.

"I like doing this because of the people I get to spend my time with. People come to mourn together or celebrate together and drink with each other," Spooner says.

Unlike the Welch street bars that are close to campus, Main Street bars offer a different crowd.

Spooner says, "We can also get very loud, but most days it is just much calmer over here."

While all drinks ordered are made, not all drinks are equal. There are always going to be some drinks bartenders find more interesting to make than others. "I love making old fashions. They are prohibition-era cocktails, and those are fun because they are precise," Spooner says. "They are good, they still taste like whiskey, they are a little sweet, but you can change the variations with whiskey and levels of sweetness."

Being a bartender has sometimes been trying, but she stays driven by being able to customize some drinks. When she has time, she really likes to play with old-fashion flavors.

"It's a standard drink that most people know how to make, but it's still hard to make a good one. It's fun for me to find the best old fashion for someone who has never tasted one before."
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