

[From left]: Black Lodge's  
Damn Fine Cosmo,  
The Jungle Room's Million-  
Dollar Mai Tai and shooters  
from Little Nickel



# SPIRITED AWAY

By Bird Cox,  
Stephanie Ganz,  
Eileen Mellon  
and Genevelyn  
Steele

With its true-blue dive bars and liquid labs on the cutting edge, the Richmond region's cocktail and beverage scene is fun, familiar and flourishing. Join us on a trip down memory lane to explore the popular drinks that have defined the decades and discover where to order these classic cocktails around the region. We also hop behind the wood to catch up with leading bar managers and mixologists to discuss everything from current trends to standing orders, explore the burgeoning spirit-free drink movement and recall some favorite watering holes of Richmond's past. Cheers!



# DRINKS THROUGH THE DECADES

A timeline of iconic cocktails and where to sip them today

By Genevelyn Steele

1940s

## Daiquiri

*Virago Spirits*

Limey rum drinks, a hallmark of island culture, were adopted as grog by the British navy. In 1896, American Jennings Cox christened his rum-lime-sugar tippie the daiquiri, after a Cuban port, but it was writer Ernest Hemingway who put the drink on the cocktail map. Virago's rotating monthly creations steer toward local collabs, such as Black Heath Meadery's dark berry-filled "Farmer's Friend," made with Virago's Four-Port rum.

1950s

## Martini

*Heritage, Southbound*



A classic martini synthesizes well-stirred gin with James Bondian style, even if, as in the case of "Mad Men" Don Draper, the fashioning veers louche. At Southbound and Heritage, bar master Jess Bevenour expertly drapes her favorite Japanese gin, Roku, with a lemon twist, dry vermouth and a dash of orange bitters, though the more traditional options – London Dry gin and olives – are always on the table.

1960s

## Island Inspired

*The Jungle Room*

Backyard luaus and Tiki mugs ushered in the swinging '60s, when mai tais were made with multiple rums and fresh ingredients, including homemade almond syrup. The Jungle Room proves that island escapism never goes out of style, with serious decor and a killer Million-dollar Mai Tai mixed with Guyanan, Martinique and Brazilian sugarcane spirits, house-made orgeat and lime – \$2 off during "Jungle Hour."

1970s

## Creme de la Creme

*Cobra Cabana*



Rattan and psychedelic, maximalist interiors have reemerged in 2022, alongside creamy-sweet boozy drinks such as the grasshopper. One vintage constant is Cobra Cabana's white Russian, sluiced into a pint glass and dubbed the Dolph Lundgren after the Swedish "Rocky IV" actor for its extra-largeness. Try it in vegan form, too, with Belle Isle Moonshine Cold Brew, vodka, Kahlua and almond milk.

1980s

## Shooters

*Little Nickel*

Nothing screams '80s more than rolling into Little Nickel and tossing back one of their juicy shots – yes, they have a dedicated shooter menu! The throw-it-back El Camino mashes up anise-scented Greek mastiha, rum, blue Curacao and pineapple juice. Need further proof that bartender Madison Pere stays ahead of the curve? Chain restaurant/shooter bar Bennigan's has relaunched.

1990s

## Espresso Martini

*The Jasper*

Like many a la modes, this drink was first shaken in London a decade prior to climaxing behind Richmond sticks in the mid-'90s. Granted hall-of-fame status by The Jasper, bar tsar and co-owner Brandon Peck's keeps his version of the cold brew coffee 'tini stays au courant via house-made espresso liqueur, Carpano Antica Formula vermouth, creme de cacao, brandy, Demerara sugar and freshly pulled espresso.

2000s

## Cosmopolitan

*Black Lodge*

By the turn of the millennium, the hoi polloi – not just upwardly mobile New Yorkers – had cell phones. And just like that, both cells and Cosmopolitans have been updated. Rather than adding cranberry juice, Black Lodge's Damn Fine Cosmo shakes vodka infused with whole, fresh cranberries clarified to remove any haziness, with lime and Cointreau, resulting in a lighter, crisper cocktail than the original.

2010s

## Vodka-free

*Saison*



Created by beverage nerds over a decade ago, Saison's cocktail menu undergoes frequent and seasonal reboots, yet its iteration of a classic G&T has remained a keeper. Made with herbal dry gin and bitter, house-hopped tonic over chunky ice cubes, it's the grapefruit peel's citrus essence that lifts this refreshing, highball to Richmond's best-of lists.

2020s

## Frozen

*Sergio's*

Slushies, blender drinks and spiked soft-serve were en vogue pre-pandemic, when a frozen drink machine behind the bar meant bragging rights. Sergio's, the family-owned pizza parlor, cyclones soft-serve margarita flavors in watermelon, mango, cherry and classic lime, available in house or to go. Cheerwine slushies and frozen mudslides mean this Midlothian eatery has the trend on lock.

A tall, clear glass filled with a vibrant pink liquid, ice cubes, and a single cherry. A lime wedge is perched on the rim, and a white straw is inserted into the drink. The glass sits on a light-colored wooden surface, and the background is a blurred, dark blue and purple bokeh.

2022

**Drink of the Summer**

**The Dirty Shirley**

*The Continental Manchester*

Recently touted by both The New York Times and the grandmotherly grocery checker who found her recipe in Southern Living, I can't stop bumping into this nostalgic giggle water. It's a 180-degree turn from the anti-saccharine, no-vodka movement of the 2010s. Sprite, grenadine and jarred, waxy cherries, all hit hard with rail vodka may be sweet, but this drink is no child's play.

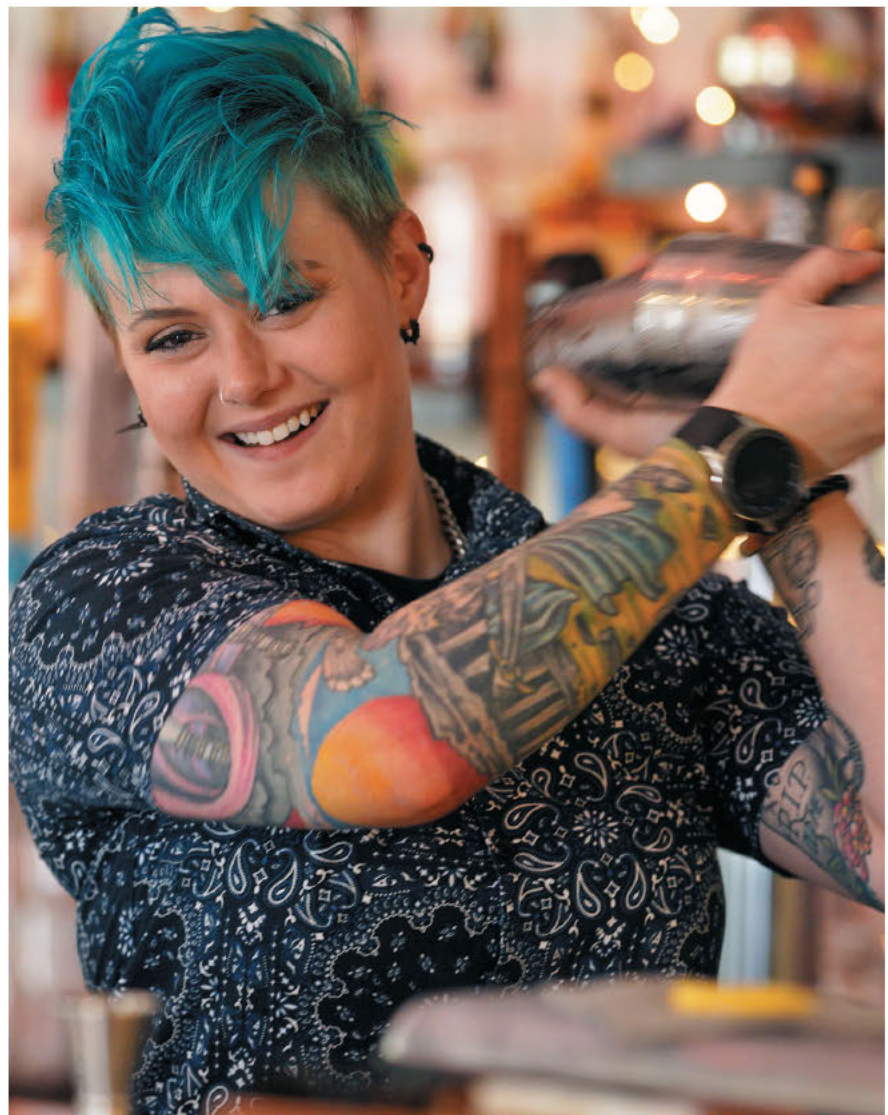


## BEHIND THE BAR

Three of Richmond's most captivating cocktail makers

By Bird Cox

There's a massive amount of talent behind the bars of our city, and it comes through in a vibrant, varied rainbow of skill sets, knowledge bases, personalities and flavor profiles. Richmond has everything from reliable watering holes to boundary-pushing cocktail lairs. No matter the mood, there's someone on the other side of the glossy wood making a beverage you're bound to enjoy. These much-beloved, big-energy bar managers share their thoughts on ingredients, mixology and life.



**THE CYNOSURE**  
KATIE STUART, FOO DOG

**ANYBODY WHO CLAIMS** the Instagram handle “Bar Daddy” is someone we want to know, and Katie Stuart — half swagger, half humility, all magnetism — has taken the title at Foo Dog, as well as for her nearly 200,000 thirsty TikTok fans. As a service industry presence, she is pure, unadulterated, blue-haired fun, and she makes a mean margarita.

Her backstory is gritty, like her shift drink of choice (a PBR and a shot of Jameson). Her first job was at Fredericksburg's Fun Land arcade at age 16, working in the kitchen, followed by gigs at Buffalo Wild Wings and Chuy's in Short Pump, where she was told that she “had the right attitude for the bar” and was promptly put behind the stick as soon as she turned 21.

“I don't know if the ‘bar attitude’ thing was good or bad,” she says, laughing. After Chuy's, she moved on to Halligan's in Shockoe Bottom. “That was probably the most eye-opening bartending experience ever,” she says. “I loved and hated that job with every fiber of my soul. It taught me to be tough,

confident, to stand my ground — that this was my house. I got fast, efficient. And I had to learn to relate to all walks of life.”

After a stint at Fatty Smokes, she was offered the bar manager spot at Foo Dog, and the combination of pandemic timing and creative freedom opened the floodgates for the development of her flair-drenched style. She also started posting drink tutorials on TikTok. “I want to teach people to make cool cocktails for parties, or for special dates,” she says of her videos where colorful liquids pour through the air, good songs play and people learn a thing or two. “It's educational content for home bartenders.”

Stuart is in her most natural state smiling and doing her thing behind the bar. A Foo Dog customer recently asked her to make a drink the color of her hair, and the Yuzu Talkin' to Me — a yuzu-ginger moonshine version of a lemon drop with a punch of blue Curaçao — was born in an instant. It's now one of the most popular drinks on the menu.



**THE COMPOSER**

**STEVE YANG, BRENNER PASS AND BLACK LODGE**

**A STORY ON STEVE YANG** has to start with his success in the U.S. Bartenders' Guild World Class competition, repeatedly placing as a finalist over the past four years among the top 100 bartenders in the country. His most recent competition entry, The Fine Bone, a citrusy gin and oolong-infused and -smoked concoction that he served with a hot towel and tea sandwiches, undoubtedly reveals his style.

While accolades speak to his skill, the soul of his work is too intricate and tender to be explained by an award, no matter how prestigious. Food and cooking are deep wells of inspiration for Yang, who occasionally makes pop-up kitchen appearances crafting dumplings and steamed buns — perfect little bites with flavors imparted by a childhood spent in a Chinese restaurant. Rather than tweaking cocktail recipes to pair with the food he loves, he goes straight for the food itself and develops from there. Black trumpet mushrooms, roasted pistachios, yogurt, soy sauce and lemon oil are all ingredients in his drink repertoire. One heavy hitter on the Brenner Pass list, The Devil Is a Lie, uses mascarpone to substitute for egg white.

With complex ideas, Yang is truly an artist. Pushing the craft beverage industry forward, he continues to work on what he hopes to see more of in the future: Asian-inspired flavors. “Outside of Japanese influences,” he qualifies, which are already widely present. “At the end of the day, keeping it fresh and making new flavors is fun.”

**SEE YOUR FUTURE** in the purple, smoke-filled crystal ball — er, bubble — atop the Oshun's Potion at JewFro, home of Paul Halstead's cocktail sorcery. Experimentation and boundary-pushing are Halstead's modus operandi. He managed the bar at two locations of the Michelin-starred Fiola (first in Washington, D.C., then in Miami) before heading to Richmond and having some fun with the Jingle Belle Christmas pop-up put on by the team who opened Jewfro. His time-intensive, house-made peanut butter rum was the star in a marshmallow-topped holiday delight there, and its success, along with his creative drive, landed him in conversations about the bar menu for the Jewish-African concept Jewfro. Halstead set out to develop cocktails that would mesh with the restaurant's experience of marrying both cultures, incorporating curry, beets, sumac and other less utilized ingredients to complement the dining menu.

The fat-washed Elijah Craig bourbon and its cigar syrup sweetheart in the Elijah's Ascension is a combination that makes Halstead proud. Like much of his menu, it's got a hypnotic, magical element, too: smoke from a butterscotch-infused wood chip. “I want people to feel comfortable here, but open-minded, excited,” he says. “One of the main ideas behind the creation of the JewFro concept was to bring people together. It's a safe place. We bring diverse groups of people in.” ■



**THE CONJURER**

**PAUL HALSTEAD, JEWFRO**



Longoven's "She's All That," featuring Lyre's Aperitif Dry, fermented tomato, citrus oleo, basil, lemon and soda water



## OUT TO DRY

Welcome to the spirit-free movement, the beverage industry's wave of the future

By Eileen Mellon

The word "mocktail" should be retired forever. Archaic and lazy, it implies a lack of authenticity that fails to reflect the spirit world's most recent renaissance of reimagining nonalcoholic drinks. There is no better time to practice teetotalism, as bartenders are embracing booze-free options with the same — and, perhaps, even greater — creativity, to concoct drinks that are as balanced and sophisticated as their hooched-up counterparts.

"I want them to be just as exciting as an alcoholic drink," says Sophia Kim, bar manager at Longoven. "It's about inclusivity — offering something delicious and just as thoughtful is important. We're a hospitality business, we want people to have a good time and help people enjoy where they are, and that definitely should include nonalcoholic options."

Nonalcoholic beverage sales represent one of the fast-

est-growing sectors of the beverage industry, increasing 33% last year, according to market research firm Nielsen. Attracting those who are sober, pregnant or perhaps simply looking to take a break from alcohol consumption, no-proof is the movement of the moment.

"I think creative drinks can — should — be more than just nonalcoholic versions of standard alcoholic drinks," says Erin Scala, beverage director of Common House and Birdie's, which feature an entire menu dedicated to temperance.

With almost three decades in the industry, Scala says that while she was working as a bartender at the Michelin-starred (now closed) Public in SoHo, she began to replace the notorious post-shift shot with a nonalcoholic version, and it quickly became a request from several of her fellow employees. Both Birdie's and Common House offer a menu of nonalcoholic pairings during wine dinners.

"When we really use the ingredients to their full potential and play to the strengths of the ingredients, it opens up a whole new world," she says. "Fifteen years ago, many vegetarian dishes were approached as nonmeat versions of classic meat dishes. Today, vegetarian dishes are more normalized, and [nonalcoholic] cocktails are entering a similar space."

The shift is also reflected on a retail level. Lagunitas Brewing Co. released Hoppy Refresher, a zingy, hopped sparkling beverage in 2019; bars such as Washington, D.C.'s Binge and New York's Listen and Getaway are dedicated to the on-the-wagon movement; and companies, including early-on-the-scene Seedlip, in addition to Lyre's, are selling spirit-free products ranging from nonalcoholic bottled gin to canned cocktail-inspired sips. In June, Richmond welcomed two dry bottle shops, Point 5 in Carytown and Enjoy Ceremony in the Fan (there are three Hampton Roads outposts).

Kim, who has helmed the bars at Sticky Rice and Saison, says that temperance encourages bartenders to think outside their usual catalog of ingredients and techniques, leaning on interesting additions such as yogurt to create texture or the Italian soda Stappi to add bitterness. They are ditching obvious options such as soda water or tonic and juices, instead finding ways to uniquely replace the bold flavors of spirits.

The sans-booze approach also empowers patrons and staff to recognize that being social doesn't have to mean throwing one back.

"It's one of those delicate things where bartenders especially recognize that too much can lead to addiction and alcoholism," Kim says. "People that don't drink still want to be able to sit at a bar, and go out to eat dinner, and not have it be so obvious that they're not drinking anything."

Scala echoes that sentiment.

"A lot of the problems with alcohol are overindulgence," she says, "but if you give the people the option to not overindulge, all the bad things about alcohol can lessen in some way." ■

# DEALER'S CHOICE

Area bartenders share reliable libations, favorite watering holes and industry predictions

By Eileen Mellon and Bird Cox



**MADISON PERE**  
LITTLE NICKEL

**Go-to watering holes:** Riverside Tavern, O'Toole's, Bamboo Cafe

**Favorite bar ingredient:** Pepper, whether Thai chile, Fresno pepper or peppercorns

**Standing drink order:** Everyday, it's Tito's and soda with a lemon.

**Previous stomping grounds:** Mojo's, Racine and Weezie's Kitchen — RIP.

**Industry predictions:**

Wellness shot cocktails, CBD/THC cocktails, more themed pop-ups and competitions

**Biggest industry shift:** Being able to do to-go drinks has been an absolute game changer, and I hope it's here to stay.



**PAUL KIRK**  
FUZZY CACTUS

**Go-to watering holes:** Lately, my go-to bar would be Cobra Cabana.

**Standing drink order:** The old-fashioned and daiquiri will never get old. Give me a pour of Angostura, and I'll take it down with joy.

**Drink you are most proud of:** The Zombie Bird, a mix between two of my favorite Tiki drinks: The zombie and the jungle bird.

**Favorite bar ingredient:** Spirits aside, one of my all-time favorites would have to be falernum (a Caribbean liqueur).

**Industry thoughts:** The world of bars and cocktailing is ever-growing. With that growth, there should come a deep-rooted acknowledgment and strong foundation with the past — just like life.



Restaurant Adarra



**NASIM SAIFULLAH**  
EN SU BOCA,  
GET TIGHT LOUNGE

**Go-to watering holes:**

The Village Cafe, it's my favorite neighborhood dive, affectionately referred to as "the Villagio" by me and my friends.

**Standing drink order:** Naked and Famous (mezcal, chartreuse, Aperol, and lime juice)

**Drink you are most proud of:**

A cocktail I made while working at Aloj named "What the (Dill)io." It was the result of a happy accident when I grabbed dill instead of fennel from the garden.

**Favorite ingredient:** Amaro Montenegro



Cobra Cabana



**CHRISSIE GRIFFITH**  
BAMBOO CAFE

**Years at Bamboo:** 20

**Go-to watering**

**holes:** City Beach, Sidewalk Cafe, Joe's Inn — anywhere I can walk to.

**Standing drink order:**

Beer and a shot. I drink a lot of Espolon [tequila].

**Behind the bar:** Every brunch shift, I line up glasses all the way down the bar and pour bloody marys. On Friday we sing, "Bourbon ginger, gin and tonic, PBR."

**Bamboo effect:** A lot of people feel like it's theirs. Everybody kind of fits in here. There's no shame at the Bamboo.

**Biggest industry shift:** Everything is more elevated. It's fun to be like, "Oh, make me a martini with Japanese gin."



**DOMENICK GIANNELLI**  
THE JASPER

**Go-to watering holes:** Cobra Cabana most

nights. Adarra and Grisette have amazing drinks and hospitality.

**Standing drink order:** Funky daiquiris are always wonderful, and Trinidad sours are exceptionally refreshing.

**Industry predictions:** "Super juice" versions of the traditional lemon and lime juice have caught on. Innovations that expand upon flavors.

**The view from behind the wood:** There will always be endless terrible first dates, therapy sessions and people thinking I'm their true love from across the bar.



# ON THE ROCKS

By Eileen Mellon

## Last Call

These bars may no longer be pouring, but their memories live on

### COUS COUS

FORMER ADDRESS: 900 W. FRANKLIN ST.

So nice, they named it twice. This beloved Richmond spot was known for tapas, karaoke and DJ sets where people from all crowds could imbibe and boogie. Open from 2006 to 2013, the space housed a number of tenants before its current concept, Mochinut.

### PORTRAIT HOUSE

FORMER ADDRESS: 2907 W. CARY ST.

Owned by Don't Look Back's Hamooda Shami, Portrait House was where a bevy of local bartenders including The Jasper's Brandon Peck, and Katy Best of Kismet Cocktail, got their humble beginnings. Short-lived (2013-15), it's currently home to Citizen Burger Bar.

### PIE

FORMER ADDRESS: 214 N. LOMBARDY ST.

Time stood still when walking the stairs to the second level of the Fan watering hole Pie, currently where Westray's Finest Ice Cream resides. Like a cramped frat house, it was dimly lit and tightly packed, with the lingering scent of stale cigarette smoke and popcorn from the pre-COVID-era machine that sat on the bar.

### BOGART'S

FORMER ADDRESS: 1903 W. CARY ST.

Two-dollar rail drinks on Tuesdays were every college student's kryptonite when Bogart's was open, especially with the added bonus of live music. The almost 40-year-old jazz club and restaurant, which shuffled locations, shuttered in 2008, and the Cary Street space now houses Shyndigz.

### THE FOREST

FORMER ADDRESS: 5057 FOREST HILL AVE.

Light it up and and throw it back was the undeclared motto of this judgement-free dive bar, where everyone knew your name and cigarettes and shots were celebrated. Riding steady for 16 years, The Forest closed at the end of 2020 due to pandemic struggles, with Riverside Tavern stepping in its place.



## Mix It Up

Locally made mixers to elevate the home bar

### MOTHER SHRUB

Owner Meredyth Archer's grandmother firmly believed that homemade sweetened drinking vinegars were the cure for just about everything. After her grandmother's death, Archer stumbled across a recipe in one of her old cookbooks and in 2016 started bottling her own. The mixers are ideal for taking spirits or nonalcoholic drinks up a notch.



### NAVY HILL TONIC

Part tonic, part soda, the small-batch mixer was created by friends and UVA alumni Jenny Luvas and Katie Williams. Today, Navy Hill's lineup includes the original tonic in addition to juniper, ginger, and a grapefruit club soda and blood orange variety.

### BACK POCKET PROVISIONS

Will Gray has been perfecting the family bloody mary recipe since the ripe age of 8. Back Pocket sources misfit' maters that are otherwise unfit for market from farmers across the state, rescuing 50,000 pounds of fruit annually. Mixes are available in flavors ranging from the flagship Bloody Brilliance to Southwestern-inspired Bloody Baja (vegetarian).



## Cask and Barrels

Area tasting rooms and their spirits of choice

### BELLE ISLE MOONSHINE

615 Maury St.

Sip on: Moonshine and canned cocktails

### CIRRUS VODKA

1603 Ownby Lane

Sip on: Vodka

### RESERVOIR DISTILLERY

1800 Summit Ave.

Sip on: Whiskey

### SLEEPY FOX DISTILLERY

250 N. Washington Highway, Ashland

Spirit of Choice:

Moonshine and bourbon

### TRIAL AND ERROR DISTILLERY

1606 W. Main St.

Sip on: Everything from sloe gin to limoncello

### VIRAGO SPIRITS

1727 Rhoadmiller St.

Sip on: Rum, gin, and coffee and chocolate liquers



## In the Can

Hometown spirit hounds Belle Isle Moonshine hopped on the national trend of canned cocktails locally, introducing its first drinks on the go in late 2019. Flavors range from honey habanero to the most recent, cherry limeade, crafted in partnership with the Richmond Flying Squirrels.



## Safe Bars RVA

Founded in 2019 by longtime bartender Kailie Smith, Safe Bars RVA aims to address sexual assault and harassment in establishments that serve alcohol. Working with sexual violence prevention professionals, the nonprofit comprising hospitality workers hosts training sessions that focus on how to recognize unwanted sexual aggression and how to respond to it. For more information visit [instagram.com/safebarsrva/](https://www.instagram.com/safebarsrva/)



Quoit Club punch

JAY PAUL

## Members Only

In the 19th century, prominent Richmonders such as John Marshall were members of the Quoit Club, a social club that gathered during the summer months to play the ring toss game and imbibe. The drink of choice: Quoit Club punch, made by freed slave and mixologist Jasper Crouch. Find the the revered barkeep's creation on menu at The Jasper.

## Dive Bars

With no frills, these establishments keep it approachable

### THE PITTS

2220 Broad  
Rock Blvd.

### GWARBAR

217 W. Clay St.

### THE LOCKER ROOM

5035 Forest Hill Ave.

### LAKESIDE TAVERN

5406 Lakeside Ave.

### O'TOOLES

4800 Forest Hill Ave.

### FUZZY CACTUS

221 Brookland  
Park Blvd.

### PATRICK HENRY PUB

2300 E. Broad St.

### DADDIO'S

12385 Gayton Road



JAY PAUL