



# LIQUID LIB'S

WHERE THERE'S A LOT TO WINE ABOUT

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN | IMAGES BY ASHLI MIX PHOTOGRAPHY

**L**iquid Lib's holds the distinction of being the first wine bar in Baltimore County. Since November 2013, the business has served the Timonium, Maryland community. Liquid Lib's has established itself among the best places to enjoy a glass or a bottle of Chardonnay, Merlot, Pinot Grigio, or Sauvignon Blanc.

Owner John Liberatore stated during a recent interview with the Beverage Journal, "We have 27 wines by the glass and over 100 wines by the bottle. We also have eight different draft beers and all kinds of bourbons, whiskeys, and ryes. Our menu is tapas-style, which means small portions that come out as soon as they are ready. We have a fireplace. And just last year, we opened an outdoor patio that is connected to Liquid Lib's. It's a pretty happening place with a bar top that lights up and changes colors, and our high-tops are made



**John Liberatore**  
Owner  
Liquid Lib's

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out of actual wine barrels that came from Napa Valley.”

Liberatore recalled operating the adjacent restaurant, but always being a little bothered by the small vacant space next door. He and his staff were permitted to keep their extra tables and chairs in those empty digs. But Liberatore knew there could be much more to the space. He said,

“I eventually thought, ‘You know what would be great here that we don’t have? A wine bar that serves tapas. I decided to design something that I would enjoy. I love wine, and I love good food.’”

Thus, Liquid Lib’s was born. Liberatore is especially proud that the wine bar and eatery has been successful bearing his – or at least a portion of – his name, which makes

it a great place to profile in this ongoing series of bars, taverns, and restaurants named after their owners or family.

“My name is Liberatore,” he stated, “and it’s on the front door. And I’m proud of that. Of course, it doesn’t really matter what you call your business. You’re going to be proud of it regardless. But when your last name is on the sign, I think you take





it more personally. You make even greater strides to maintain a good reputation, and we treat people right because my last name means a lot of me.”

The customers, in turn, have certainly appreciated this philosophy. “We have a great clientele,” Liberatore said. “They’re very sophisticated and knowledgeable about wine, and we do wine tastings for them frequently. As a matter of fact, we’ve had several winemakers come here personally – everyone from Michael Mondavi to Kim Crawford.”

He continued, “My favorite thing, to be honest with you, is just making people happy. I still get a thrill when somebody leaves the restaurant and says, ‘Thank you, John. We had a great dinner, and we loved everything!’ That brings me a lot of satisfaction. They are not our customers. They’re our guests. There’s nothing more satisfying to me than when I see a table enjoying a bottle of wine, laughing, and having a good time.”

Of course, operating a hospitality establishment is all about change and being able to adapt. Liberatore acknowledged the challenge of ‘keeping up with everything’: “Trends change, customers change, employees change. COVID certainly changed a lot of things, and we adapted. It’s like having a baby. There is always, always something going on that you have to keep your eye on. You can’t just sit back and think it’s all going to happen by itself.”

What has been the biggest change Liberatore has noticed post-pandemic? He was quick to answer: “What I really have noticed the most is that people tend to come out earlier now for drinks and for food. And I’ve also noticed that it slows down earlier. To me, that’s a positive. Our servers and our bartenders get a nice crowd early and they don’t have to stay until 2:00 in the morning anymore. Even on weekends, people start slacking off around midnight now. I remember back in the day before COVID, come 1:30 in the morning we would



have to turn the lights on and off to get people out of here.”

It helps that Liberatore grew up in the restaurant business. Early on, he worked as a dishwasher, a busboy, a waiter, and even a cook. “I started from the bottom up,” he said. “Over the years, I have learned to treat people the way you want to be treated. People will see it, and they will respect and support you. In taking care of people, sometimes you will do things you wouldn’t ordinarily do. But you do it because that’s the hospitality business. That’s what we

do. The successful ones in this business go above and beyond.”

For anyone reading this who is currently a dishwasher, busboy, waiter, or cook but dreams of opening his/her own place, Liberatore had some pointed words of advice. “Start small!” he urged. “Don’t think you have to go big in order to make the money. Do something that you can handle and that you love. Do it slowly. You shouldn’t rush into this business, thinking you’re going to make money overnight. It takes a long time, and it takes a lot of hours. The first



restaurant my brother and I opened up, we worked seven days a week with no days off for over a year! And I’m talking about coming in at 9 o’clock in the morning and leaving at 2 o’clock in the morning. People think, ‘Oh, the restaurant business is so fun. You come in, you chat with people, you have a glass of wine.’ But there is so much more to it. Also, train your staff right! They are your motor. Without them, you won’t go anywhere.”

Looking ahead to the second half of 2024, Liberatore said he is optimistic about where the business is headed. He concluded, “I’ll always think positive and try and make the best out of whatever comes our way. We can’t predict the future, but we can certainly adjust to it as much as we can.” ■

