

Tiny Tavern, Big Makeover

Whiteaker landmark ups the charm and downs the urinal cake scent **BY SILAS VALENTINO**

Reviews on Yelp for the Tiny Tavern range from “Ever wonder what the gateway to hell looks like? Check the men’s bathroom” to “Smells like pee.” The Whiteaker’s classic dive bar suffered from an unfavorable reputation, but in recent months the oldest bar in Eugene has undergone an extraordinary transformation. With new management, the Tiny Tavern is serving exceptionally tasty bar food, offering live music and entertainment throughout the week and is slowly returning to the epicenter of Eugene’s bar scene.

The man behind the metamorphosis is Jevon Peck. “I’ve been helping turning around bars for the last couple of years,” Peck says. “I’ve been the guy people have been calling.” Similar to Jon Taffer from Spike TV’s *Bar Rescue*, minus the bug eyes and intense demeanor, Peck has been working singlehandedly on the Tiny Tavern restoration for the last few months. A chef by trade, Peck has been involved with both The Horsehead and The Old Pad. Tiny Tavern owner Jeff Malos asked Peck to change the bar around, and Peck enthusiastically heeded the call. “Sure I’ll do Tiny Tavern,” Peck says. “It’s my bar — I fucking love this place!”

Through Peck’s management, the Tiny Tavern has undergone a huge facelift. The booths, once held together by duct tape, have been replaced, and the place no longer reeks of urine. Peck says he’s making changes slowly and incrementally to stay true to the history of the bar.

Peck hopes to make the Tiny Tavern a reputable music venue for both local and traveling bands. “We have a ton of bands in this town,” Peck says. “Why haven’t they been served?”

Yet the Tiny Tavern’s most attractive revolution has been Peck’s work in the kitchen.

JEVON PECK IN TINY TAVERN'S TEENY KITCHEN

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA



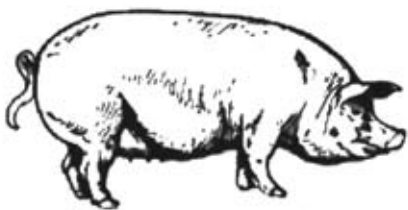
“I’ve had people come in and say ‘I’ve just had dinner at the Tiny Tavern and it’s the best meal in town,’” Peck says. Tiny’s, as it’s often called, offers a variety of specials ranging from Middle Eastern to Mexican to Chinese, which is Peck’s specialty. Located in the heart of the Whiteaker’s nightlife, Peck hopes to draw crowds in the future with a late night/early morning breakfast. “With all the breweries, I wanna be that place that basically sobers up all the drunks,” Peck says. He’ll be serving a Louisiana Southern-style breakfast filled with specially prepared grits that have a particular flare and spice. Though Tiny’s is only a tavern and not a full-scale restaurant, Peck doesn’t let this limit his ambitions with food. “I’ve personally wondered, ‘Why do bars have crappy food?’” Peck says. His most basic dishes, such as a bowl of macaroni and cheese, are expertly prepared with fresh salsa and Silk Road spices and filled with rich flavors. This is not your boxed mac ‘n’ cheese.

The Whiteaker is home to bustling bars and breweries, but Tiny’s is a unique and solid part of the scene. Peck thinks of Tiny’s as “the quintessential workingman’s bar, and just because it’s a workingman’s bar doesn’t mean it can’t be nice.” After receiving its first-ever liquor license (even though it’s been in business since 1937) the Tiny Tavern will be proudly serving those who think the best way to drink is through a shot. Peck will focus on high-end tequila and Irish whiskey and to complement the breakfast, a revitalizing bloody mary.

The resurrection of Tiny Tavern has been gradual and Peck is already mapping out plans for the future. “In two years’ time, I want to turn this place into a monster,” Peck says. With the restoration and complete reboot of the menu, the Tiny Tavern is en route to success. “The best new bar in town just so happens to be the oldest,” Peck says.

The Tiny Tavern is located at 394 Blair Blvd.

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