

MacGregor's serves up festive libations

BY RYAN HUME

Tucked in the back room of Morris' Fireside Restaurant in Cannon Beach is the new MacGregor's Whiskey Bar, which first came to fame at their Manzanita operation just three blocks from the beach.

While some businesses experience growing pains, expansion does not seem to have hurt the quality of service nor the ample supply of brown liquors on display at the most recent MacGregor's.

With an enviable top shelf that must account for at least 400 years of accumulated barrel age — including a rare Pappy Van Winkle that goes for a modest \$139 pour — a trip to MacGregor's can really squeeze the greenbacks out of the billfold if you're not careful.

It may be better to stick to the reasonably priced cocktail list or experiment with a range of flights if it's not an uber-special occasion. (I'm qualifying "special" here because every time you step into MacGregor's, it feels like a special occasion.)

There are plenty of inventive takes on classic cocktails on MacGregor's list, including the Smoke & Spice Old Fashioned, which adds cardamom bitters and a chipotle-infused simple syrup. But, after consulting the staff, I gravitated toward the Black Manhattan.

Perhaps because it's October, but the sinister name just sounded right, conjuring up images of early 80s Scorsese films in a filthy, rotten Big Apple.

In truth, the Black Manhattan is closer to a comforting, dessert-type nightcap,

thanks to a splash of the Sicilian digestif Amaro Averna, which has caramel, chocolate and citrus tones.

While not strictly on the menu, bar manager Erik Thorsnes adds a dash of black walnut bitters atop the traditional drips of Angostura when he takes this as a shift drink, and I'll have to agree, having tried both, that this really opens up the flavor profile.

Of course, it hasn't been scientifically

proven that nuts and sweets were meant to be together, but there is plenty of pedestrian evidence to support this theory. Lay all this on top of a pour of rye and you have a nice warm beverage fit for autumn.

Regardless if you are splurging on the top shelf, investigating a flight of Oregon-bred whiskeys or sipping on a Black Manhattan, MacGregor's will pour you something to remember.



Ryan Hume

Bar manager Erik Thorsnes stand behind the counter at MacGregor's Whiskey Bar in Cannon Beach with a Black Manhattan, center.

Black Manhattan

2 ounces Rittenhouse rye or your favorite rye whiskey

1 ounce Amaro Averna

3 dashes Angostura bitters

1 dash black walnut bitters (optional)

Brandied cherry, for garnish.

Ice

Put all ingredients in a cocktail shaker and stir. Strain into a cocktail glass (MacGregor's prefers stemless cocktail glasses, but whatever is on hand will work). Dollop with a cherry.

—Recipes courtesy of Erik Thorsnes, bar manager, MacGregor's Whiskey Bar, Cannon Beach, Oregon