



Long Doggers co-owners Tony Gebhardt, John "L.J." Burr and Al Steingia at Meg O'Malley's Restaurant & Irish Pub. Burr also co-owns Hemingway's Tavern.





# What'll It Be?

From brews and food to community camaraderie and school spirit, alumni-owned pubs serve everything with a side of Panther pride.

By Karly Horn

In the Green Dragon Tavern, fed up colonists plotted the Boston Tea Party.

The City Tavern was the unofficial meeting place for the First Continental Congress.

The Marine Corps was founded in the Tun Tavern, where the Corps held its first recruitment drive under the American Revolution.

Call them taverns, bars, pubs, saloons or speakeasies, but within their walls, likely over long bar tops and a few rounds, our country was born.

While not every happy hour's purpose is as noble as organizing a revolution in the name of freedom, there is no denying the prominence of the local watering hole in American society, as evidenced by its endurance throughout decades of pop culture.

Sam Malone and friends frequented Cheers daily during the '80s and early '90s. Homer Simpson has been a Moe's Tavern regular since season one. Even Harry Potter and the crew have broken up a few trips to Diagon Alley with a butterbeer at the Leaky Cauldron.

Is it merely the prospect of an ice-cold beer that keeps patrons—real-life and fictional—coming back for more?

Perhaps.

But if that were the case, a six-pack and a minifridge near the recliner would do the trick.

"We always ask our staff, 'If you can do it at home, cheaper, potentially faster and exactly the way you want it, why bother coming?'" says **Kevin Menard**, a Florida Tech alumnus who co-owns Broken Barrel Tavern with **Rebecca Menard** '03. "I think, more than anything else, it is the experience and the sense of camaraderie you build."

## Where Everybody Knows Your Name

The Menards have owned and operated Broken Barrel in Palm Bay for 10 of the 12 years they have been married. While its extensive selection of beers on tap and made-from-scratch barbecue attract Brevard County residents from near and far, experience has taught the Menards that it is more than food and beverage that attracts a loyal customer.

"If you think about your own habits and where you go frequently, you see that the people around you—either working there or the customers—probably match your character, your preferences or your style a little bit," Rebecca Menard says. "And I think that restaurants or bars can facilitate that in a way."

At Quarters Brewing Co., it is easy to spot the similar interest.

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Brock Tucker of Quarters Brewing Co.

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Owned by **Brock Tucker** '09, Quarters is Downtown Melbourne's first and only "barcade," featuring beer brewed in-house and about two dozen retro arcade cabinets stocked with games like "Ms. Pac-Man," "Centipede," "Space Invaders" and pinball.

"In Brevard County, being the technology hub that we are, we have the audience here," Tucker says. "We have folks who were around when the first video games were invented and folks who probably just turned 21 yesterday, but they all come in here and have a great time."

Florida Tech alumnus **John "L.J." Burr** calls that great time an "epic moment."

"Epic doesn't mean large, but it means an elevated, inspired and connected experience with the guest," says Burr, founder and part-owner of Brevard County staples Meg O'Malley's Restaurant & Irish Pub, Hemingway's Tavern and the Long Doggers franchise. "I used to just sell food and beer, but the story we're telling is really what it comes down to now—it's an experience."

Each of Burr's restaurants embodies a unique identity, which he infuses into their every facet, from menu to decor to social events. But to inculcate that persona and truly develop a customer's

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## Melbourne-Area Alumni-Owned Bars



**Want to grab a drink?**

Mark your calendar for the Homecoming Panther Pub Prowl! See details on page 30.

## Sol-Tree Cocktail Co.

Not all bars need four walls and a roof to serve up good times and even better cocktails.

Sol-Tree Cocktail Co., the concept of which **Jessica Haines** '13 first established for a project in Florida Tech's Student Business Incubator, is a beverage catering and mixology company based in Melbourne.

"Underlying our work is passion—for what we do and for the community and valuable relationships we have built here over the years," Haines says.

With a focus on sustainability, Haines looks to the kitchen and the farm for inspiration when building new drinks. She incorporates seasonal produce and fresh ingredients to craft unique spins on classic cocktails at events like corporate gatherings, weddings, fundraisers—even your homecoming tailgate!

Crimson in color and refreshing in taste, "Panther Punch" is a Sol-Tree original cocktail. Mix up a single glass or a tailgate-sized batch to share while you cheer for the Panthers on game day.



## Panther Punch

Single	Ingredients	Batch
2 oz.	Cucumber Vodka	375 ML
5 oz.	Lemonade	1 gallon
1 oz.	Dry Red Wine (Cabernet or Merlot)	1/2 bottle

Plus, cucumber slices to taste.

Pour lemonade and cucumber vodka over ice.

Top with red wine to create a layered effect.

Garnish with fresh-sliced cucumber and enjoy!

### 1. Lost Shirt Brewing Co.

7025 Industrial Rd., West Melbourne | lostshirtbrewing.com

Alumni Connection: Owner Johann Brockhausen

BYOS: Bring your own snack to pair with an East Wind Honey Gold Ale

### 2. Hemingway's Tavern

1800 W. Hibiscus Blvd., Melbourne | hemingwaystavern.com

Alumni Connection: Owner L.J. Burr

Try Papa's Cuban Sandwich + an 1800 Hibiscus Margarita

### 3. Broken Barrel Tavern

4700 S. Babcock St., Palm Bay | brokenbarreltavern.com

Alumni Connection: Owners Kevin and Rebecca Menard

Try the BBQ Eggrolls + a Dragon Point IPA by Intracoastal Brewing Co.

### 4. Meg O'Malley's Restaurant/Irish Pub

812 E. New Haven Ave., Melbourne | megomalleys.com

Alumni Connection: Owner L.J. Burr

Try Meg's Threesome sampler of Potato Balls, Sausage Rolls and Cabbage Wraps + a Guinness

### 5. Quarters Brewing Co.

903 E. New Haven Ave., Melbourne | quartersbrewing.com

Alumni Connection: Owner Brock Tucker

Try the Bratwurst + a Dad Breakfast coffee porter

### 6. Chumley's Depot

1929 Depot Dr., Melbourne

Alumni Connection: Owners Marcus Darnell and Mike "Chumley" Gaines

Try the Marcus Wings + a Yuengling draft

### 7. Long Doggers (one of six locations throughout Brevard)

890 N. Miramar Ave., Indialantic | longdoggers.com

Alumni Connection: Owners L.J. Burr, Al Steinganga and Tony Gebhardt

Try the Tico Pico Bowl + a Hatteras Red Lager by Intracoastal Brewing Co.





Kevin and Rebecca Menard toast friends, regulars and fellow Florida Tech alumni Christopher Durie, Vic Ross and Ed Gula at the Broken Barrel Tavern.

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affinity for their establishments, more than food or drink, owners rely on their staff.

“Anyone we hire to work the bar has got to be friendly and personable and have a similar interest to the crowd that comes here, so they can form those relationships,” Tucker says. “Yeah, we have great beer and great games, but we also know these people. We want to see them and find out what they’re up to.”

Yes, the creators of “Cheers” had it right when they suggested that “You want to go where everybody knows your name.”

But for **Johann Brockhausen** ’91 and his team at Lost Shirt Brewing Co. in West Melbourne, that’s only the beginning.

Rick has a bar stool with his name on it—literally. He also has a beer named after him. So does Jimmy. And Mike.

“These are the people who are going to sustain your business and keep you going,” Brockhausen says of his regulars. “But even if you’re new here, you don’t get treated any differently—you’re going to get treated like you’ve been here 100 times.”

## Which Came First

The bar or the bargoer?

In the case of alumni-owned bars and restaurants in Brevard County, arguably, the patrons came first.

Attending Florida Tech—making community connections and getting to know the area and its

residents—established alumni business owners in the community and resulted in a support system and instant customer base from which to springboard.

Burr’s first business was the College Campus Cafe, which he opened with a fraternity brother to fill the need for a nearby Panther hangout. Today, his Long Doggers co-owners, **Al Steingina** ’89 and **Tony Gebhardt** ’98, are also fraternity brothers.

Tucker brewed his first beer in his off-campus apartment while he was a student at Florida Tech.

Kevin Menard never dreamed of opening a bar or restaurant until he took his first bartending job at Taps Pub Bistro, a since-closed bar across the street from Broken Barrel, to pay for college.

Rebecca Menard was working at Florida Tech when they first opened the restaurant, making their soft opening a family, friend and Panther affair.

“When all of this was first coming together, it was wonderful to see that people were willing to take a risk on something that we were taking a risk on,” Rebecca Menard says.

Before opening the doors at Lost Shirt, Brockhausen relied on the feedback of everyone he encountered who would accept a free beer—so just about everyone: his friends and family, his fraternity brothers, parishioners at his church, other local brewers and bar owners, all of his doctors, his pool guy, his lawn guy, his high school classmates at their annual reunion.

“I’ve lived here awhile. I know a lot of people, and a lot of them have come in and supported the brewery,” Brockhausen says. “But since we’ve opened, my contacts, my exposure and the people I know have increased tenfold.”

Like the wine they serve, the community ties that the alumni bar/restaurant owners have developed over the years get better with age. And the benefits are mutual.

Sponsoring charity events, donating food, drink and catering services, hosting nonprofit organization fundraisers and selling products that benefit charitable causes enhance the relationships at the businesses’ very foundations.

“We do our best to donate back as much as we possibly can,” Kevin Menard says. “We continue to hopefully make an impact on the community because it has made such an outsized impact on us.”

## Not Every Night is a Party

It’s easy to see what draws people to visit bars, but what draws others to open them?

While the common warning that 90% of new hospitality-industry businesses fail within the first year is a myth, as in any industry, there are risks associated with opening your own business.

Despite common misconceptions, it’s not always a party when you’re





Johann Brockhausen of Lost Shirt Brewing Co.

the immanent host. Owning a bar, a restaurant or some combination of the two is a lot more than sipping—or even serving—cocktails.

“Job title is irrelevant,” Kevin Menard says. “In the last 24 hours, I’ve been the cook, the dishwasher, the plumber, the barback, the bartender, expo—any number of jobs—just whatever needs to be done.”

And since no one can do everything alone, keeping others motivated is a full-time job in itself.

“Some of the most challenging parts of opening restaurants have been learning skills to motivate people, creating training platforms and building a system that supports people having new opportunities,” Burr says.

Still, people quit. Equipment breaks. Employees call out at the last minute. The power goes out—maybe for a week at a time, as the Menards learned the hard way in the days following Hurricane Irma.

Paperwork, bills and pressure build. And yet ...

Last week, one of her employees thanked Rebecca Menard for the raise he received—the raise he earned.

Burr hired Jimmy Tarasavage to work at Meg O’Malley’s when he was 18 years old. About 14 years, some mentorship and a lot of hard work later, today, Tarasavage is his business partner and co-owner at Hemingway’s.

A couple of servers fell in love while working at Broken Barrel—where they hosted their wedding and reception.

For every unpleasant customer who walks through their doors, there’s a birthday boy, a couple on their first date, one family gathering for a reunion, another to say goodbye and celebrate a life well-lived.

“We have been so lucky to watch the people who grace us with their presence every day,” Rebecca Menard says. “Whether they work here or just choose to be here as our guest—it’s just such an honor to have them choose us.”

In short, the reason to visit a bar and the reason to open one are the same: community.

## Born in a Bar

At the local pubs, with its lively music and friendly faces, the conversation, drinks and—for some—creative juices flow. Many big ideas started as just a scribble on a cocktail napkin and grew to be so much more.

**Shark Week** During a discussion about programming strategies over a few drinks at the bar, Discovery Channel executives decided that a full week dedicated to sharks would do well. They were right.

**Pet Rock** After lamenting the commitment of pet ownership to fellow patrons at the local watering hole, Gary Dahl wrote the *Pet Rock Training Manual* and started selling the maintenance-free pets that quickly became a must-have fad in the '70s.

## “A Few Good Men”

Aaron Sorkin wasn’t sipping drinks when he wrote “A Few Good Men”—he was serving them. As a bartender at Broadway’s Palace Theater, Sorkin went home from work every night with pockets full of cocktail napkins inscribed with the beginnings of a script for what became the hit legal drama.

**NASCAR** Since stock cars themselves were invented by Prohibition bootleggers trying to outrun police, it’s not altogether surprising that the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) was founded at a rooftop club in Daytona Beach, Florida.

**Florida Tech** As legend has it, our very own roots stem from a bar—specifically, the Pelican Bar, where a stranger overheard Florida Tech founder Jerry Keuper suggesting that the area needed a university to support NASA’s burgeoning space program. The man slid his 37 cents of change down the bar and quipped, “Go start your college with this.”