

# Battle Flag Tavern plants itself into Lewiston's celebrated culinary scene

BY JOSHUA MALONI

The Battle Flag Tavern is just plain cool.

Tenant No. 3 in the Bax building on Center Street opened to rave reviews just about a month ago. Phil Palmeri and his wife, Tracey, returned to their industry roots in providing Lewiston with a gin joint to complement many acclaimed restaurants (not to mention neighbors Sgt. Peppers Hot Sauces, the Mad Hatter Tea House and, soon, Brewed and Bottled Craft Beer Shop).

"We've put a lot of heart and soul into this," Phil said.

He explained, "This used to be our full-time gig before Tracey and I went back to school. We kind of say we were retired in our 20s from doing the service industry thing – bartending, waiting tables, staying out all night – that sort of stuff. And then I went into health care ... she went to teaching – teaching is her dream job. This is my dream job – with her full, 100% support, backing and efforts."

He grew up with grandparents who owned and operated Steve & Jean's in Niagara Falls.

"I always kind of enjoyed being around that," Phil said. "That establishment is also where I cut my teeth. It was my first bartending job and I used to go with my gramps to the bank and to take inventory; and I just saw how he treated people and how people treated him, as far as being a member of the community as well as a business owner. It kind of taught me everything I need to know, at least about how to treat people and how people will treat you back."

So, as the story goes, Phil and Tracey had "an idea we were kicking around. This has been five, six years in the making, and we were looking at other locations, other towns," he said. "We moved to Lewiston about 10 years ago, from Buffalo, and kind of started scratching around a little more in the village, seeing what it has to offer as far as going out for us, good bars, good restaurants. And we just kind of noticed that maybe there were a couple of little niches that could be filled."

"And a few summers ago, we were actually sitting on the patio at Brewed and Bottled, and started chatting with Neil from Sgt. Peppers, just about general business climate down here; how it's growing; how Sgt. Peppers is doing so well, and how Brewed and Bottled is doing so well. I kind of noticed, at that time, there were more vacant properties – this being one of them."

"So, as we walked home from Brewed and Bottled that day, we kind of did a little window shopping, and we peeked into this building. And I just saw the layout and the frontage and thought, 'Wow, this would be a fantastic place for a little tavern.'

"And then fast forward to maybe a day or two later at work, I work with Jen Bax. Her and her husband, Al, own the building. I said, 'Hey, Jen, I looked at that building on Center Street. It's actually for sale,' because the signs only said, 'For Lease.' I went home and looked it up, and it said, 'For Sale.' And her and I had been talking at work over the years about cocktails and bartending and her and Al's long-term goals, and my



Phil Palmeri said Battle Flag Tavern got its name because he was "just trying to capture the spirit of the frontier. That's also why we keep gin and whiskey at the forefront. That's what was around back then. And the battle flag that I designed ... 'Life, Liberty & Libation' ... is our battle flag. That's what we're all about."

and Tracey's long-term goals. I said, 'The building's for sale.' She said, 'You're kidding? Al's looking for a place for his law office, etc., etc.' And a few hours later, he had put an offer in. So, it was like, 'Well, we'll definitely be your first tenant.' And here we are."

Starting from scratch had its advantage it that, with this unit, "it was a blank slate," Phil said. "The top thing is this location and the landlords. They're just amazing people. Just good souls that knew Tracey and I on a personal level before any of this. And it was basically like, 'Here's the size of your rectangle. Do what you want to do with it.' It's just unbelievable support. And we did – we did exactly what we wanted to do with it, with them kind of checking in and cheering us on along the way. And they put a lot into this building, as well. Aside from the individual units, just – same for them – a lot of heart and soul and sweat and tears went into this building."

At Battle Flag Tavern, "We're more cocktail forward," Tracey said. "There's so many great bars around here, and they do offer cocktails, but we're trying to be gin and whiskey forward – but we'll offer a little bit of everything. We have wine, vodka, rum – everything that you could possibly want. But gin and whiskey forward; and we have a unique offering of cocktails. We make them unique, because we make all of our own syrups. We squeeze all of our own juices fresh. Local produce and local herbs. We'll make a thyme simple syrup. We just missed peach season, this year, unfortunately, so we couldn't do a peach simple syrup."

"We just did a nice honey ginger syrup," Phil said. "Everything is from Lewiston."

"We're just trying to keep it local and offer something unique, and cocktails, and something a little more laid back," Tracey said.

"Yeah, and we switch it up every week," Phil said.

"We have some standards that are pretty popular to keep, and then we are switching up our cocktail features every week to kind of fit the season. So, moving into the holiday shopping season, we're going to take the classic Negroni and we have some wonderful Lockhouse Ginnamon. We're going to make a nice Ginnamon Negroni. Cinnamon and the holidays, hand in hand."

"You'll see some cider drinks with some local ciders. Local apples. Different styles of old-fashioned. Apple cinnamon old-fashioned."

The Palmeris chose this type of offering because "She's always liked gin and I've always liked whiskey, and then we kind of flip the script on one another," Phil said. "We've got each other into the opposite, and then just started playing at home. We had a wonderful herb garden in our yard. We started playing with that. We started playing with house syrups; with all the fresh, local fruits, there's so much to offer. And that also lends itself to our rotation."

"Early farm season, strawberry lavender. And then you get into the berries, and then, later on, like we are right now – we're a little past it – but apple, pear. Throw in some rhubarb – stuff like that."

Battle Flag Tavern had a soft opening on Oct. 21.

"It was gangbusters in here," Phil said. "Fortunately, we ac-

quired a really good staff. Probably the top three veteran bartenders in Lewiston – two of which came out of retirement to work here. So, that's very exciting. ... They're very talented, very fast. They bring people in. We texted them that Thursday night and said, 'Who wants to work this weekend?' And we were good to go."

He noted, "Our all-star bartenders are Melissa Bell, Kelly Conway and Bobbi Stokes. The latter two also own small businesses in Lewiston: Kelly's Beauty Bar and Be OK Studio."

Thinking about next weekend, Phil said, "Right now, we offer a small snack menu, and we have a rotating panini menu. We'll probably be doing those Black Friday/Small Business Saturday, because there'll be a lot of shoppers out looking for a bite to eat."

In addition, "We'll have some drink features and some holiday-themed cocktails and some specials."

For those out walking along Center Street, "I think they should just know that, whether they like cocktails or not, they should come in and give us a try," Tracey said. "We're really good at finding out what people like, and kind of turning a lot of non-gin drinkers into gin drinkers."

"We're just always here with a smile, and ready to greet and meet new people."

Battle Flag Tavern is located in the first unit at 442-444 Center St., Lewiston.



## We're Social...

Stay up to date  
on the latest news...  
Follow Us



**NIAGARA FRONTIER PUBLICATIONS**

Niagara-Wheatfield Tribune  
Island Dispatch  
Lewiston-Porter Sentinel  
Grand Island PennySaver



[wnypapers.com](http://wnypapers.com) • [facebook.com/wnypapers](https://www.facebook.com/wnypapers) • [@wnypapers](https://twitter.com/wnypapers)

## COMING NEXT WEEK!

Lewiston's 2021 Holiday Coloring Contest

Sponsored by



906 Center St., Lewiston  
215-1350

and



**Niagara Frontier  
Publications**  
Niagara County  
Tribune-Sentinel

[wnypapers.com](http://wnypapers.com)



Kids 4-6 years, 7-9 years and 10-12 years may participate.

3 winners in each group will win great prizes!

## Real Help For Your Health

Presented by  
**Dr. Glenda R.  
Rose  
Chiropractor**



### Invest in your Health

With prices soaring at the grocery store, we have to think about making healthy choices and pass up the non-nourishing junk processed "foods" and learn to cook again from scratch, especially with the holidays approaching. Get the sugar and white flour out. Substitute sparkling water without artificial sweeteners, instead of pop and diet sodas. Avoid the chips with their Trans Fats. Snack on nuts that taste good in their raw state, (macadamia, pecans, walnuts and almonds).

Invest in nourishing food: non-starchy vegetables (leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts), berries (straw., rasp., black, blue), good fats and oils (grass fed butter, extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, MCT, lard, tallow), grass-fed beef, pork, chicken, lamb, wild animals (like venison, buffalo) wild caught fish only (salmon, sardines, mackerel), pasture-raised eggs, and seeds (chia, flax, hemp, pumpkin) that you can grind to use in shakes or in yoghurt, instead of granola. Avocados are an excellent food and can be made into delicious snacks like guacamole. Tubers are root veges (yams, sweet potatoes, potatoes, rutabagas, turnips, carrot, celery root, beets). Herbs and spices make the flavor, but have other health benefits too (garlic, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, cloves, parsley, dill, rosemary). Occasionally, for a treat you can have 75-85% dark chocolate.

Variety is the key. Whole foods will nourish you and keep you healthy. So put your money where your mouth is and invest in the most important thing you possess, your health. **Rose Chiropractic, P.C. is located at 435 Ridge St., Lewiston. Call (716)754-9039. NOW HIRING - Nutrition Assistant.**