



BEST BARS

It's whet-your-whistle time.

We've canvassed every form of bar across St. Louis—from plush clubs to corner pubs, from Soulard to St. Charles—and ordered, sipped, observed ... and ordered again. The result? A comprehensive guide to our 45 favorites

BY MARGARET BAUER, THOMAS CRONE, MATTHEW HALVERSON,
BRYAN A. HOLLERBACH, CHRISTY MARSHALL, STEVE PICK,
STEFENE RUSSELL, STEPHEN SCHENKENBERG & SARAH TRUCKEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WHITNEY CURTIS & DILIP VISHWANAT

PJ's Tavern

PJ's Tavern? That sounds like a textbook hole in the wall, a bona fide dive, doesn't it? Scarcely! In reality, PJ's may well rank as Kirkwood's sweetest surprise. Now starting its second decade of operation, it features a clean, classy interior—a long, lovely bar forms its focus—and barkeeps who pay close attention to patrons, delivering drinks and appetizers with alacrity. After a trying day at the office, the Boulevard here tastes blissful, as do the potato skins (generously topped with Monterey Jack and cheddar, bacon bits and scallions). The impressiveness of the tavern prompts curiosity about PJ's restaurant and separate martini bar. More "research" may be needed ... 123 W. Jefferson, 314-966-2001, pjstaverninkirkwood.com (BAH)

WEBSTER GROVES

Weber's Front Row

This isn't where you go to sip frou-frou liqueurs, appreciate a boutique brew or show off your fashion sense. You're here for the company: the extraordinarily convivial, talkative crowd of T-shirt-

and-jeans-clad regulars, whose small-town camaraderie can't be bought for the price of a half-dozen candy-colored "martinis." No hipsters, millionaires or scenesters here: just local sports on a dozen TVs, delicious food and a bespectacled young bartender who knows everyone's names. That and the fish tank—surprising in this smoky atmosphere, a school of variously striped cichlids tussles and cavorts with abandon in the 50-gallon tank behind the bar. 8169 Big Bend, 314-961-4500, webersfrontrow.com (MB)

Cyrano's Café and Wine Bar

Located just around the bend on Lockwood, Cyrano's is Weber's diametrical opposite. Where Weber's displays an all-American appetite for sports, beer and everything grilled, Cyrano's (much like its Clayton sister establishment Roxane) evinces a delicate, European sensibility. Bright, '70s-motif chairs pair with stone-topped tables and counters, where tea lights glimmer in tiny red glass cups. A dozen quiet conversations ripple across the room. You're not here to meet someone new—you're here with someone you'd like to know better. Were it summer, you'd suggest

splitting a chilled bottle of wine—but it's getting colder, so cozy up bar-side with your date and order a Cherries Jubilee flambé and coffee drinks: a Millionaire's Coffee, spiked with Grand Marnier, and a Bailey's Mint Kiss. 603 E. Lockwood, 314-963-3232 (MB)

SOUTH COUNTY

Ten Mile House

Clichéd as it may seem, some bars spark love at first sight—and Ten Mile House likely does just that with regularity. As AC/DC blasts from the jukebox and regulars josh one another and the bartender, a cold draft Busch and a hearty BLT form a fine lunch here, in a row of older commercial properties due north of Mackenzie Road. The metal stools have the pleasant heft of the past—none of this tinfoil furniture of the present—and the bar top has "character." (Countless coats of varnish fail to conceal decades of use.) Co-owner Tony Smith, a graying bear of a man, ambles past and amiably rumbles, "What's up, brother?" Thanks to Ten Mile House, our spirits, Mr. Smith—our spirits. 9420 Gravois, 314-638-9082, 10milehouse.com (BAH)

Pink Galleon

The sheer spectacle of certain bars demands admiration. Consider, for instance, the Pink Galleon. In company with such mysteriously named concerns as Chinese Food—but not Eats, sad to say—it lies the proverbial stone's throw east of Lemay Ferry and occupies a strip shopping center whose façade matches the color of calamine lotion. Inside, the bar's warehouse construction amplifies the sound system's bass almost uncomfortably and holds roughly two dozen coral-topped pool tables, old-fashioned pinball machines, video games including (ah, nostalgia!) Ms. Pac-Man and other amusements. Order a draft—served in a frosted mug weighty enough to brain Siamese twins—and cheerily ponder why the operation and the three other members of its local fleet bill themselves as adult Chuck E. Cheese's. 4010 Butler Hill, 314-845-2386, pinkgalleon.com (BAH)



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