

## Best Libations

### MARTINIS ON THE AVENUE

One slow Tuesday night several summers ago, bored Martinis bartender Katie Katcher looked at the shelf of liqueurs and thought, "We never use this stuff – let's get creative." At the time, Martinis on the Avenue made fifty-two types of the cosmopolitan cocktail. After Katcher's

experimenting, the martini list swelled to more than 120 different martinis and manhattans – a feat worthy of a Nobel prize in mixology.

"I lined up rocks glasses on the bar and started pouring," says Katcher, whose day gig is at BFL Marketing, a public relations firm. "As people came in, I said, 'Here, try this.' One guy tried this crazy purple one and went, 'Wow! This tastes like cough medicine, but it's really good.'"

Katcher's concoction became the Vix 44 (vodka, crème d'almond and blue curaçao). Other creative drinks include the green Pearl Harbor (pineapple-flavored Finlandia and midori), the Silver Bullet (Skyy vodka and a splash of J&B Scotch) and the Chocolate Monkey (vodka, crème d'banana and Godiva liqueur). She's also got three "bartender's special" recipes in her head that she refuses to add to Martinis' list.

She'll even play "Iron Bartender" with you – name a liquid or a liqueur, and she'll make a martini out of it. Like the steak martini (vodka, Tabasco Sauce and splashes of Worcestershire and



A-1 sauces and a shake of pepper, garnished with a piece of carpaccio) one customer demanded.

The secret to a great martini isn't in the ingredients, she says. "A martini is all about the glass you use and the atmosphere you drink in. It's about sitting down in a classy place and having a conversation."

Martinis serves martinis in a personal shaker in a small ice tray, accompanied by a ribbed glass garnished appropriately (twist, hand-stuffed anchovy olive, strawberry, etc.) and a canapé. All ages mix in the comfortable bar, where fine cigars are smoked, conversations bubble with intimacy and Frank Sinatra-type music decorates the background. Oh, and don't forget owner/executive chef Carolyn Leedy's simple but tasty menu.

– Benjamin Gleisser

15315 Madison Avenue, Lakewood. Sunday and Monday 5-10 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday to 11 p.m., Thursday-Saturday to midnight. Reservations accepted. ADiDsMV/\$\$\$\$. (216) 221-7494.