



*John Tebeau*

WHERE TO GO

BARS, TAVERNS,  
AND DIVES  
NEW YORKERS LOVE

WHAT TO DRINK

RIZZOLI  
NEW YORK

# BROOKLYN INN

148 Hoyt Street (at Bergen Street) BOERUM HILL, BROOKLYN  
718-522-2525

“WHEN WE TOOK OVER THE BUSINESS, we had one mantra: let’s be smart enough not to fuck it up. It’s legendary for a reason.” So says Jason Furlani, manager since 2007, on the responsibility of buying the venerable Brooklyn Inn, one of the oldest bars in a borough that values its old bars. “What is amazing is that, throughout time, everyone saw the value in the space itself,” notes Furlani. “There have been minor additions and improvements over the years, but the one thing that is consistent is that no one fucked it up. The room itself is sacrosanct.”

When you walk into the Brooklyn Inn, it’s almost like you’re entering a church. The twenty-five-foot ceilings soar, as does the intricately carved, almost altar-like mahogany backbar. Stained glass glistens, tin cherubs watch over you, and woody gargoyles grimace, high above the bartender.

Since 1885 congregants have assembled here, taking communion (in glasses only; nary a wafer is served) and connecting with each other. “It’s the people,” bartender Heather Clinton tells me when I ask her what she loves about the place. Regulars are revered here, but first-timers are equally welcome. “It’s typically a steady mix of regulars and newbies,” says Furlani.

The mood of this neighborhood institution runs the gamut from sacred to profane. On a Saturday afternoon the place can be as quiet as a law library, every patron reading, writing, or waiting for a friend. Five hours later it’s absolutely raucous, like a roaring, whiskey-fueled 1958 cocktail party at George Plimpton’s pad, friends and strangers pressed shoulder to shoulder, banging elbows, talking, drinking, howling, yawping.

“Saturday nights are the wild-card night. That’s our ‘anything can happen time,’” Furlani says. “It can be a shit-show of young, entitled asshats, or a wedding party [as in: the *entire* wedding] will show up, or three birthday parties will pile in like a clown car.” But Sundays at the Brooklyn Inn are special in a different, *much* quieter way. Maybe it’s the inn’s churchy atmosphere. When light pours in all those big corner windows, it’s transcendent. Furlani puts it this way: “We’re a harbor in the calm waters of routine and a port in the storm of life. We do the same thing every day, and we welcome both newcomers and regulars with open arms. Long as they don’t rock the boat. It’s hallowed ground, something to be both respected and revered.”



•BROOK N INN•



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**WHEN TO GO**

I like Friday, Saturday, or Sunday afternoons, when the crowd is sparse and the whole room glows with magical light that highlights the relief of the bar's carvings, not to mention all that stained glass. For a rowdier time, stop in for a Friday or Saturday (anything can happen) night.

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**WHERE TO SIT**

"I could tell you that, but then I'd have to kill you," Furlani says. "Only because the regulars would show up on my lawn with torches and pitchforks. I have a family to think about." My personal favorite: the leftmost seat at the front end of the bar, which has a great view of both the room and the street outside. Come winter, it's conveniently located near the radiator. Just watch out for those regulars with their torches and pitchforks . . .

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**WHAT TO DRINK**

Start with a Guinness. Their system mixes nitrogen and CO<sub>2</sub> for the perfect pint. "One of the best outside of Ireland—perfectly calibrated, perfectly cold, and always fresh," according to Clinton. Then order a shot to go with that Guinness. Pours are heavy and prices are light.

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**HOW TO GET THERE**

Take the G or the F train to Brooklyn's Bergen Street stop, then walk a block east to Hoyt. You can transfer to the G (or take a short walk) from the A and C at Hoyt-Schermerhorn.

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**WHAT ELSE?**

In the back room that holds the pool table, you'll see several defunct doorbell-like buzzers above the wainscoting. Decades ago, when the Brooklyn Inn was a restaurant, diners in back would summon waiters with a push of these buttons, like attendant call buttons on airplanes. People still love to press them, looking around like naughty little kids to see if anything will happen.

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**NOTICE *the* STAINED-GLASS PANELS *that* ADORN  
THE MAIN ROOM, INCLUDING A STATELY "AZ" FROM 1885:  
THE INITIALS *of the* ORIGINAL OWNER, ANTON ZEINER,  
A PILLAR *of the* LOCAL GERMAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY.**

# McSORLEY'S OLD ALE HOUSE

*15 East Seventh Street (between Second and Third Avenues) EAST VILLAGE, MANHATTAN*  
*mcsorleysoldalehouse.nyc · 212-473-9148*

McSORLEY'S IS THE GRANDDADDY of New York City's Irish bars. It smells old and woody and beery and historic. It's been in the same spot on Seventh Street since 1854, and looking at the walls, you'll believe it. The place is practically a museum that serves beer. And that, by the way, is your only beverage option, so get on board and order them in even numbers, because they're sold two at a time, in sturdy mugs that hold around eight and a half ounces.

Weekday afternoons at McSorley's are about as good as it gets: peaceful and light-filled, with plenty of elbow room to move around freely and check out the artifacts covering the walls. You'll probably find a seat during the off hours. If there's room at one of the already-occupied round tables, grab a chair. That's fine, even encouraged—it's a chatty bar, so you'll likely get into an interesting conversation. But the solitary reader has a place at McSorley's, and writers, too. Owner Mattie Maher warns that "when you start comin' here, you don't stop writin'."

Maher, a native of Kilkenny, Ireland, began working at McSorley's in 1964, when he stumbled into a server's job because the *other* Irish guy who'd just been hired hadn't shown up for his first shift. The bartender on duty threw an apron at Maher and barked, "You're late," and the rest is history. He started that day and never looked back. Now he's the boss. The owner at the time, Daniel Kirwan, asked him to buy the bar in 1977—"The original family was gone, and there was nobody left." You might find Maher's daughter and heir apparent, Teresa, working the bar these days, a far cry from the time not that long ago when it was a hard-drinking saloon that allowed only men. (That changed in 1970.)

McSorley's leads a sort of double life. Even though it's in all the guidebooks and sought out by a million tourists, it's still—much of the time—a perfectly gorgeous, quiet old bar for drinking up beer (and history) and talking with friends and strangers. There's something fantastically convivial about the place, maybe due to more than sixteen decades of pubby good cheer, camaraderie, and conversation, which have saturated the walls and the wood like long-gone cigar smoke. At its heart, McSorley's is a talkin' bar. You might meet a PhD candidate who can enlighten you on Thomas Wolfe's literary oeuvre or a world-weary NBC cameraman who was at Ground Zero on 9/11. (I've encountered both.) Other times, especially on weekends and around the holidays, it may be jam-packed with a crush of college



kids and out-of-towners, which, if you're in the mood, can be a blast. (If you're *not* in the mood, less so.) As a rule, though, the crowd, young and old, local or not, is boisterous, chatty, and having a great time.

Anyone who writes off McSorley's for its crowds is throwing the baby out with the bathwater, like people who discredit the Beatles because they don't like "I Want to Hold Your Hand." Legendary *New Yorker* staff writer Joe Mitchell, who wrote a sprawling, classic paean to McSorley's back in 1940, was no fool. It's in the pantheon of great American bars for a reason.

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WHEN TO GO

McSorley's is wildly popular with both tourists and the neighborhood's huge New York University student population, so crowds can be thick on weekend evenings. If a crowd isn't what you're feeling, visit afternoons and weekday evenings, when the bar is more likely to be chill.

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WHERE TO SIT

"When it's busy, *any seat*," according to Maher; the tables next to the front, south-facing windows are especially good. John Lennon was a regular in the seventies, and favored the seat to the left of the front door, where he could hang out on quiet afternoons and "do a little writin'!" Maher once struck up a conversation with Lennon and discovered they'd met several times as kids in Maher's hometown of Kilkenny. He remembers playing with Lennon—"just a regular kid"—on the streets near Lennon's uncle's drapery shop.

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WHAT TO DRINK

Ale or porter, sold by the pair and brewed by the Lion Brewery in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Drink 'em up and order another even-numbered round. That's what you're there for. Fun fact: The bottled version of McSorley's beer (sold nationally) features a portrait on the label of old John McSorley himself by master caricaturist Drew Friedman, who was paid in—you guessed it—beer.

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HOW TO  
GET THERE

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Subway: The 6 to Astor Place and R to 8th Street–NYU are both a short walk away.

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WHAT ELSE?

Where to start? The wishbones balanced precariously on the gas lamp above the bar since—legend has it—World War I. On the walls, Victorian-era photos of the bar’s former baseball team, the McSorley’s Nine, handlebar mustaches and all; dozens of framed front pages from long-defunct newspapers and political posters; a 1943 photo of Woody Guthrie playing for the workingmen by the potbelly stove (still used in cooler months, by the way); a wanted poster of John Wilkes Booth. There’s an enormous “collage” installation of old stuff behind the bar: a shot of Babe Ruth before his final at bat, campaign buttons (Nixon, Kennedy—both John and Ted—others indiscernible), Purple Hearts, a bust of JFK sporting a pair of cheap sunglasses, and, on occasion, a Yankees cap. Flags (mostly Irish and American); figurines (a racehorse, a corny leprechaun, a Statue of Liberty); pewter and brass tankards, ceramic mugs, bottles, bottles, and more bottles (all shrouded in dust); stashes of receipts for God-knows-what; a carving warning patrons to “Be Good or Be Gone”; masks, pipes, canes, mounted fish. Sailor hats, soldier hats, Santa hats. A nineteenth-century “What? Me worry?” picture featuring the jug-eared, dentally challenged goofball who would later inspire *Mad*’s Alfred E. Neuman. Feast your eyes. Notice everything you can.

THE BAR ITSELF WAS CRAFTED *in* 1854 OUT OF OAK, SAYS MAHER. IT’S A STANDING BAR, WITH NO STOOLS, JUST A LONG FOOTRAIL. GOOGLE AN IMAGE OF ARTIST JOHN SLOAN’S FAMOUS 1912 PAINTING *McSORLEY’S BAR*, NOW HANGING *in the* DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS. IT LOOKS PRETTY MUCH THE SAME IN THAT PAINTING AS IT DOES TODAY.



# SHRINE

2271 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard (between West 133rd and West 134th Streets) HARLEM, MANHATTAN  
shrinenyc.com · 212-690-7807

WALK IN AND THE FIRST THINGS YOU'LL NOTICE are the walls and ceiling. The room is a cool collage of artwork, music posters, and hundreds of old album covers, stapled to the ceiling and representing the eclectic mix of music you can hear at Shrine . . . and then some. Look up and see famous faces looking down on you. Nat Cole, Jerry Lee Lewis, Josephine Baker, Jerry Garcia, Marvin Gaye, Cyndi Lauper, Michael Jackson, Rod Stewart, Grace Slick. Quite a mix, no?

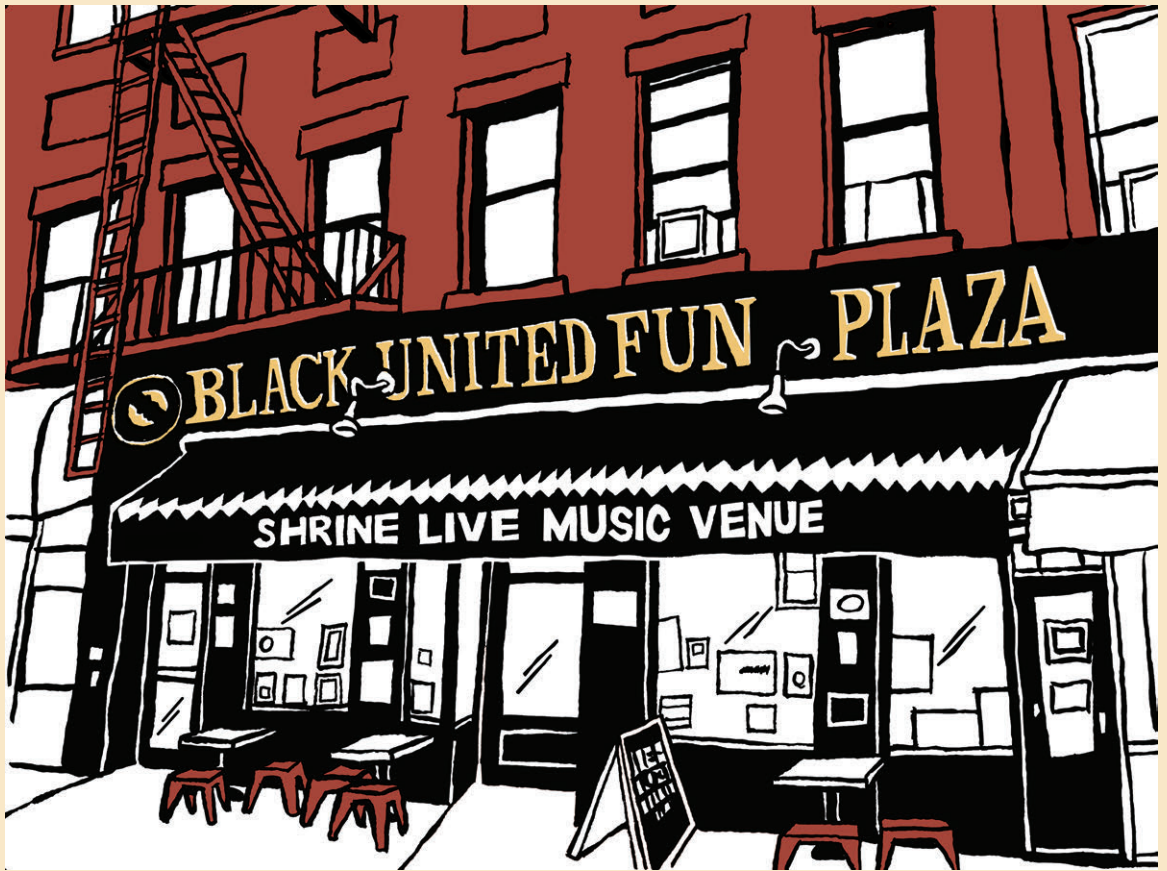
To your right is the cozy little bar of your idyllic music-club dreams, to your left a few café tables, and straight ahead a modest stage bathed in purple, blue, and green lights. The album covers crawl down the walls back there, a chandelier casts a subtle glow on them, and a jazz trio fills the room with soft sound.

Abdel and Sivan Ouedraogo (he from Burkina Faso in western Africa, she from Israel) opened Shrine in 2007 as a multimedia arts and culture venue where they could, Abdel says, “create something special uptown, and be a part of the art and live music scene.”

“Walk in during the day to visit the venue and art exhibitions,” he suggests. “We have different genres of live-music performances every night beginning at four p.m.—rock, jazz, African, Latin, reggae, blues, country, indie. From midnight to closing, we have different DJs playing all types of music for music lovers to dance to.”

And that’s the community Abdel and Sivan have fostered at Shrine: a family of music lovers from all over the city who go there like pilgrims, early and late, any day of the week, to be part of this special place. Often with no cover. Gotta love *that* in New York.

Shrine is a warm and lovely spot, and the staff and regulars will welcome you like part of their family. Abdel says that newcomers are struck by “the mix of customers from all races and backgrounds and the very friendly customer service. Our goal is to make you feel at home.”



AS YOU MIGHT GUESS LOOKING AT THE SLIGHTLY REWORKED SIGN ABOVE ITS ENTRANCE, SHRINE TOOK OVER *the* SPOT ONCE OCCUPIED *by the* BLACK UNITED FUND, HARLEM'S LARGEST BLACK CHARITY GROUP. THE SIGN, ONE LETTER SHORT, NOW READS BLACK UNITED *FUN* PLAZA.

SO THIS WAS KIND *of a* BIG DEAL:  
PRESIDENT OBAMA STOPPED *by SHRINE on HIS SWING THROUGH HARLEM*  
A FEW WEEKS AFTER HIS FIRST INAUGURATION IN 2009.

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WHEN TO GO

Sundays at five p.m., for the weekly jazz jam featuring Lu Reid. There's a less dense crowd than on Friday and Saturday nights, so you'll be able to kick it at the bar and check the place out, especially the eye-popping decor. After the jam, stick around and you might see anything: big band, reggae, punk, or even "hypnotic folk." Bonus: On Sundays there's no admission fee at the nearby Studio Museum of Harlem. It's one of the gems of the neighborhood, "internationally known for its catalytic role in promoting the works of artists of African descent." Check it out, then round out your cultural experience with live music at Shrine.

*Happy hour: Monday to Saturday, 4 to 8 p.m. \$3 draft beers, \$5 frozen margaritas, \$6 well drinks, and special prices on appetizers.*

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WHERE TO SIT

Sit anywhere at the little bar, settle in, and enjoy a leisurely drink and a snack, from chips and guac or a cheese plate to grilled fish, grilled lamb chops, shish kebabs, or the Fela Burger (named after the Nigerian musician and activist Fela Kuti and topped with sautéed eggplant, red peppers, onions, and cheddar). "When you're done," says Abdel, "take two steps away from the bar and dance to the live music or DJs."

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WHAT TO DRINK

Start off with a Henny Colada. Why? "It's the best Hennessy Colada in town!" as the lady next to us at the bar said. My wife couldn't ignore an endorsement like that and relished her piña colada made with Hennessy cognac in place of the standard rum. Next get something from Shrine's cocktail menu, such as the Baron, a bright, bubbly, brandy-based riff on a French 75 that takes Sivan's maiden name.

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## HOUSE RECIPES

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### Henny Colada

*2 ounces Hennessy cognac*  
*2 ounces coconut cream*  
*2 ounces pineapple juice*

Combine all the ingredients in a blender with ice and blend until smooth. Pour into a sexy piña colada glass. Top with a maraschino cherry and a pineapple slice.

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### Shrine's Baron Cocktail

*2 ounces Rémy Martin VSOP brandy*  
*¾ ounce fresh lemon juice*  
*¾ ounce simple syrup (equal parts water and sugar, stirred or shaken until the sugar completely dissolves)*  
*Sparkling white wine*

Shake the brandy, lemon juice, and simple syrup in a cocktail shaker with ice until well chilled. Strain into a cocktail glass and top with sparkling wine.

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## HOW TO GET THERE

Subway: The 2, 3, B, and C trains stop at 135th Street, a one- or three-block walk to Shrine, respectively.

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## WHAT ELSE?

The old album covers all over the ceiling. You just don't get to see so many of these wonderful relics in one place very often. The Dazz Band, Janet Jackson, Men at Work, and *West Side Story*, the movie soundtrack. George Benson, Dave Brubeck, Charlie Barnet, and the *Beverly Hills Cop II* soundtrack. Abdel's favorites include Peter Tosh, Michael Jackson, Prince, and Fela Kuti's *Black President*. I was thrown back in time when I spotted Eddie Murphy from his eponymous 1982 standup comedy album grinning down on me.