



# McFAUL'S IRONHORSE TAVERN

A MODEL OF CONSISTENCY IN PARKVILLE

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN | IMAGES BY ASHLI MIX PHOTOGRAPHY

**G**len McFaul likes to challenge himself. He could have named his bar/restaurant in Parkville just the IronHorse Tavern, and it probably would have been successful. But he decided to call it McFaul's IronHorse Tavern. Ego? Nope. "By design!" he exclaimed, during a recent interview with the Beverage Journal for the latest feature in our series of articles on bars, restaurants, and taverns named after the owner, the owner's

family, or some other person. "It was a way for me to put some added pressure on myself to make sure I was going to accomplish what I told everyone I was going to do. When you put your name on a business, it's even more important that you follow through and execute on your plans. Naming a business after yourself or your family gives you a heightened awareness of everything."

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**Glen & Kristin McFaul**  
(with son Glen)  
**owners & operators of**  
**McFaul's IronHorse Tavern**

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And in opening McFaul's IronHorse Tavern more than a decade ago, Glen McFaul was able to restore the luster and reputation of the Baltimore County cornerstone restaurant that was located on the east side of Loch Raven Reservoir. The site had been everything from a blacksmith shop to a post office to a general store since its initial construction in 1886. Owned by the Sanders family for years, their ice cream and sandwich shop became a restaurant in 1991 until its sale in the late 2000s.

And the "IronHorse" part of the name? It was a term Native Americans would use to describe locomotives (the nearby Ma and

Pa Railroad ran from Baltimore to York, Pennsylvania). As well as Baltimore sports teams having also adopted the moniker to describe such tough, dedicated players as Johnny Unitas, Art Donovan, Brooks Robinson, and Cal Ripken Jr.

McFaul thought of his dad as such a man. "He was an IronHorse who never

missed a day of work. His father-in-law never missed a day of work either."

McFaul has taken a lot of inspiration from his family over the years. Indeed, his grandfather, Ernie Tyler, was the Baltimore Orioles' long-time umpire attendant who worked 3,819 consecutive home games at Memorial Stadium and Oriole Park at



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Camden Yards between 1960 and 2007. The man was married for 64 years and had 11 children, the oldest being Glen's mother. He was so respected that "Cal Ripken knocked on his office door at the stadium when he was about to be inducted into the Hall of Fame and said, 'Hey, Ernie, you're going to miss your first game.' Cal made him his honored guest at his induction in Cooperstown."

These are the types of men Glen McFaul holds himself up to, and it's reflected in his business success. "Consistency is key," he stated. "If someone has come to your business and had a great experience, and they've gone and told two other people and they come to your business . . . that consistency has to be there. You can't have the three of them looking at each other and the one guy saying, 'Uh, this isn't how it was last time.' Make sure you have that consistency, particularly for the people who are referring others to come give you a chance."

And that consistency has been followed through to the Tavern's food and beverage offerings. "Consistency and quality ingredients will always make great food and great drinks," McFaul said.

At the same time, he and his staff aren't afraid of tinkering and experimenting to keep things fresh. McFaul's IronHorse Tav-



ern changes its drinks menu seasonally. "We do Crushes really well, and we have a few signature drinks that vary throughout the seasons," he noted. "Some of our favorites are our pumpkin martini. We also do a Gentlemen's Fig drink. We have some really talented guys and gals [working the bar], and I have a background in mixology."

McFaul and his staff also change the food menu twice a year. In fact, it's one of the favorite parts of his job: "Working in collaboration with our chefs and providing some of my ideas . . . I love that! I love sitting down and working out what hopefully doesn't upset the people. Generally, our customers are excited about the new stuff coming. It's exciting for me whenever we launch some new stuff or even when we bring back some old menu items. Now that we are 12 years old, we can have some 'retro bring-backs.' It's fun to tell customers, 'Hey, remember in 2013 when we served this?' We try to stay on trend, but we also have a lot of plays on your normal comfort foods and your normal comfort drinks."

But the work is not without its share of stresses and pitfalls. In some ways, McFaul feels he is still reeling from the COVID-19 crisis earlier in the decade. "I think the most challenging part started after the pandemic," he remarked, "trying to restart.



We went from 66 employees to six in one day. It was the day before St. Patrick's Day 2020. Ever since then, everything has just been a little more difficult. But that comes from trying to keep a really good customer service level and making sure you have the right people – people who understand what their job is, but also understand what we've created here as a tradition.”

He also got some key pieces of advice from the late Nacho Mama's owner Patrick “Scunny” McCusker: “He told me a little bit of an Irish undertone will never hurt, consistency is key, and don't be afraid to change things up and give people a little variety. With those three pieces of advice, I

molded my business!”

He added that maintaining a good business and appealing to the broadest range of customers is also about not getting into politics with the paying public, especially in these divisive times. Again, he went back to some wise counsel his father gave him: “He would ask me, ‘Hey, do you know who Cal Ripken votes for?’ And I'd say, ‘No.’ And he would say, ‘That's the point!’”

And now Glen McFaul is in a position where bartenders, barbacks, former waiters, and others come to him for business advice. What does he tell anyone who's thinking of opening their own place someday and maybe even naming it after them-

selves or their family's name? “Believe in yourself! And when you're putting together your plan, make sure it is achievable to execute, and then execute it with everything you have. Put the right people around you, and take pride in what you do each and every day. If you do all that, you'll be fine.”

As for the rest of 2024 and into the new year, does McFaul think everything will be fine? Does he have any predictions? Is he feeling optimistic? Pessimistic? A bit of both? He thought for a few seconds and then answered slowly with a slight chuckle and a measured tone, “Well, politics aside, let's just say I am trying to stay optimistically realistic.” ■

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