



# BUNNY'S BUCKETS & BUBBLES

HOPPING DOWN THE FELLS POINT TRAIL

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

**"F**or anyone who has never been here before, we've been taking the combination of fried chicken and champagne – one of the greatest combinations of things ever – and mashing it together! Fried food and bubbles just go so great together. You have the high brow and the low brow. Creating the core business model from that and then building it out from there has been a lot of fun."



So says Brian Acquavello, who opened Bunny's Buckets & Bubbles in the Fells Point neighborhood of Baltimore city in the summer of 2023 with partners Jesse Sandlin and Matt Akman. They had each taken inspiration from a restaurant named Leon's in Charleston, South Carolina, and thought it would be a fun concept for Maryland's Charm City. So far, they have been proven right.

During a recent interview with the Beverage Journal, Acquavello said, "We took a pretty iconic space in Fells Point that was just a bottom floor. We took it over and completely redid the whole entire space. We built a full-kitchen upstairs, and today it's kind of a modern-style diner that is very bright when



**Brian Acquavello**  
**owner / operator**  
**Bunny's Buckets & Bubbles**

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you walk in. Very bright and very fun.”

With this being the latest installment in our ongoing series of articles on bars, restaurants, pubs and taverns in and around Maryland with funny and quirky names, the question thus became . . . why Bunny's? Acquavello was quick to answer: “Bunny is our chef-partner. Jesse Sandlin. She was on ‘Top Chef,’ season six. We became friends a long time ago, and we’ve been working together for a while. Conceptually, we just thought throwing her out there as the namesake would be the best way to go. Then, the Buckets & Bubbles plays off putting fried chicken in a bucket and bubbles in a bucket.”

Bunny's Buckets & Bubbles serves more than just fried chicken, of course. The menu features an array of Southern comfort food. And the cocktail list is an extension of the establishment's overall feeling of fun and escapism.

Acquavella remarked, “We have bartenders and bar managers who do a great job putting things together. We do focus somewhat

on cocktails with bubbles, of course. But as we’ve been going these first two and a half years, we have been finding the drinks that our guests love the most, and we keep those and have them on our anchor list that we rotate frequently. Mostly seasonally. But we also try to push the envelope a bit and let our bartenders and staff show off their creative sides and not get bored doing the same thing



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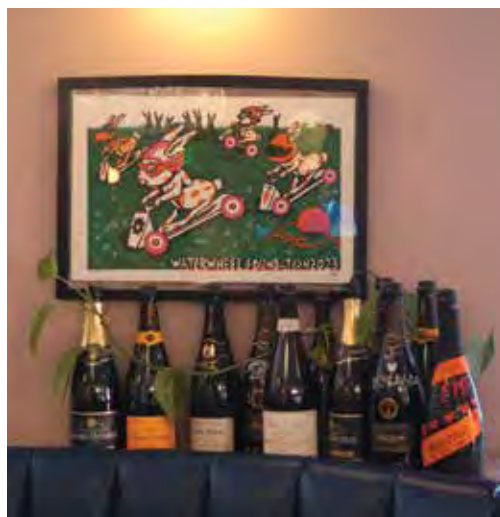




every day.”

Bunny’s top-selling drink, for instance, is called The Fix Is In. “It’s our take on an espresso martini,” Acquavella said. “It’s basically a Bananas Foster-flavored espresso martini that is named after a phrase one of our partners’ fathers would utter whenever something would go wrong while watching a sporting event. ‘The fix is in!’”

As for clientele, Acquavella calls Bunny’s customers a “true melting pot. We get a lot of people from the neighborhood to start. They’re our regulars who we see two or three times a week. But we see everyone. When the



Ravens played Chicago recently, we had so many Bears fans in. I love seeing the eclectic mix of people on any given day that come in. We just had 20 people from Canada come in last Monday who were in town for some convention. I asked them, ‘How did you find us?’ And one of them said, ‘Oh, this guy’s wife follows you on Instagram.’ So seeing them sitting next to some of our local neighbors, it’s just really cool.”

He continued, “The reason I’m in this industry is the people. I love hospitality. My brain defaults to ‘How do I help people?’ If you tell me who your favorite sports team is, I think, ‘What can I do to help you enjoy that team more?’ It’s a strength and a weakness sometimes, but I love it. It makes me happy to make others happy, and to make a career out of that has been pretty rad.”

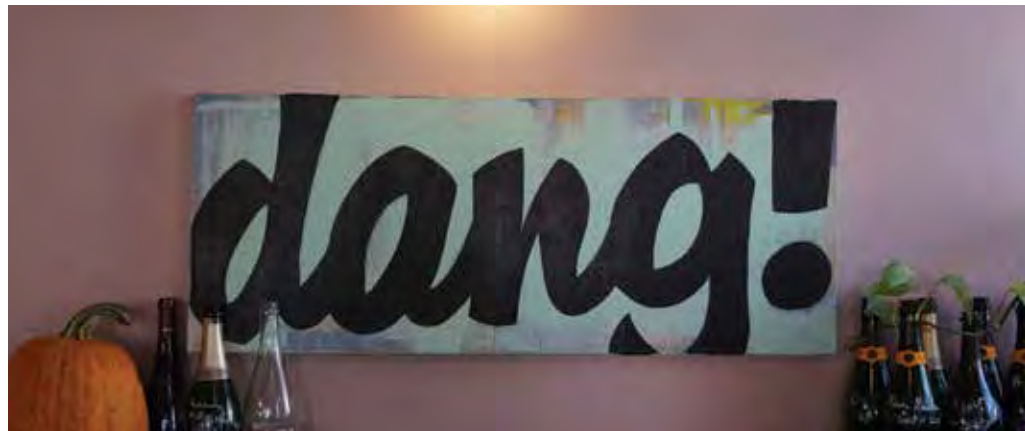
And when times get tough – and they get tough frequently in the business of hospitality – Acquavella leans on lessons he’s learned over a lifetime. One of the best pieces of advice he ever got was when he was a teenager and working his first job on a Christmas tree farm. “My boss said: ‘No one is coming to help you.’ It sounds pretty negative, but I never took it as such. To me, it means if you want something, you’ve got to go get it. You’re not going to get it for free. You’re going to get it with hard work, with putting in the hours. My first restaurant I bought, I probably slept in it 100 times that first year. I probably worked two years straight. But it was fun. It was mine.”

Paying it forward, Acquavella has some words of wisdom for anyone reading this who dreams of opening his/her own place someday. Whether you are currently a bartender or a server or an assistant manager, he urges, “Learn everything! If you want to own a bar, you better be the busboy. You better be the barback. It’s not a matter of ‘I’ve been a good bartender, and now I’m going to own a bar.’ That’s the easy part. Once you open, you don’t



get to lay your head down for a second. When you think you have a moment to relax and think of fun, creative ideas, the toilet will overflow or the dishwasher will break. Owning a business is not as glamorous as most people think. And even then, sometimes hard work doesn't work. Sometimes you get a pandemic."

That said, Acquavella is optimistic about the remainder of 2025. "At least in Baltimore and the Fells Point area, there seems to be a lot of positive momentum," he concluded. "But there are a lot of question marks in the world right now, too, so who knows about the new year? January, February, and March are usually hard months in the restaurant business, in general. We're just going to be prepared as much as possible and navigate the best we can to keep people employed and the bubbles fizzing!" ■



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