

August 3, 2006

## Patio Boom

Outdoor drinking has never been better  
Thank the smoking ban

By Sara Smith

Seated around the impressive stainless-steel koi pond inside Marshall's Restaurant in Grandview, happy hour imbibers call out drink orders and nibble on appetizers. Bartenders furiously shake martinis and hustle beers into impatient hands.

Sitting in the air-conditioning amid the cool, earth-tone decor makes the heat of an August day fade away. Best of all, there's some elbow room. Meanwhile, outside in the sweltering summer air, the patio is standing room only, chock-full of smokers and their perspiration-soaked friends.

Marshall's is one of many Central Ohio bars and restaurants that have contributed—somewhat reluctantly—to a party-patio renaissance.

A patio was once a bonus at a bar. But in the two years since Columbus and many surrounding burbs started banning smoking indoors, it's become hard to find a thriving bar without one.

**"The best investment you can make in a bar": Jimmy V's \$78,000 outdoor space features marble floors and waterfalls**

In the early days of the ban, smoking bargoers became accustomed to crowding under sidewalk awnings in oppressive heat and frigid cold. But that changed quickly as pub owners realized that nice patios—some with space heaters and even TVs—could strengthen their tenuous hold on smokers' business. Now the choice is simple: Install a patio or lose business to someone who has.

"It's more of a necessity now because of the smoking ban," said Marshall's owner Matt Marshall. Marshall put up an awning last week



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### 'I hate the patio, but you have to do it'

so smokers could enjoy a cigarette at his bar rain or shine. He installed an outdoor heater last winter to make sure none of his customers get frostbite when they chase their rum and Cokes with a hit of nicotine.

In all, it set him back almost \$40,000. But he said the advantage the patio space gives his bar over unpurched competitors is well worth the money.

"I would be worried if I didn't have a patio," he said. "You can't walk outside to smoke with a beer because it's an open container. You have to have a patio."

As if to prove Marshall's point, his nearest competitor, the Old Bag of Nails Pub two doors down, opened its patio this spring. General Manager Gretchen Danaceau said portions of the parking lot in front of the bar had to be torn out to make way for more sidewalk space, and new umbrellas were bought to match the all-season tables and chairs.

The pricey project helped her compete not just with Marshall's but with the lounges of nearby Lennox Town Center, located in Clinton Township, a remaining stronghold of legal indoor smoking.

"We lost a lot of our regulars," Danaceau said. "It came down to us really needing the patio."

She said that the new outdoor space has had its intended effect. Before the patio addition, the bar was closing early, rarely drawing enough late-night business to stay open past 11 p.m. Now the place—more specifically, the patio—is busy until last call at 2 a.m.

"Now that we do have the patio for smokers, more people will stay and drink," she said. "We like that. Before it was really just a food crowd."

Not all of the city's bar owners are feeling so gracious about forking over thousands of dollars to accommodate their smoking clientele.

"I hate it. I hate the patio, but you have to do it," said Brenda Belisle, owner of Spuds Bar and Grill on Henderson Road.

"It's not a patio craze," she said. "People have to do it because of the smokers."

She said despite the ban, most bars still allow people to smoke inside and risk the fines. But as a law-abiding owner, she said, it was a choice between spending \$6,000—of which \$4,800 went, for a pair of commercial-grade space heaters—on a patio or watching smokers get their cocktails elsewhere. Either way, she said, bar owners pay a price, for their smoking patrons.

"If they can't smoke inside, you have to give them a place, or they won't come out at all."


Jim Velio, who owns six bars and restaurants in Columbus, takes a more charitable view of the trend, which he believes has brought some old country sophistication to Columbus.

Velio's Jimmy V's has two new patios, both built after the smoking ban, featuring marble floors, 400-square-foot waterfalls, extensive landscaping and outdoor ceilings to keep out the elements. Price tag: more than \$78,000.

"You've got to give them a patio where they can smoke," he said. "With this competition and with other places having patios, you have to do it."

## Five primo patios

The patio boom means Columbus has great spaces to meet any of your outdoor-imbibing needs. Here are five samples, all of them smoker-friendly.



**Relaxation**  
**Jimmy V's in the back, 912 S. High St., 449-8988.**  
At this come-as-you-are hideaway, the trickle of a wall-sized fountain is the only sound to compete with your conversation. **Bonus:** Grandview version coming soon.

**College crowd**  
**Little Bar, 2196 N. High St., 291-8887.**  
North Campus's newest spot is on the main drag and squeaky clean. Check it out now, before school starts and the students mess it all up. **Bonus:** valet parking.

**Schmancy**  
**M, 2 Miranova Place, 629-0000.**  
With a DJ on Friday nights and a view of the Scioto and Downtown that's second to none, it's worth a few extra pennies. If you order a well drink, though, you'll feel like a schlub. **Bonus:** John Glenn lives next door.

**Caffeine fix**  
**McJoe Lounge, 600 N. High St., 225-1563.**  
Nowhere else can you sit over a high-way sipping an espresso martini or getting jazzed on great coffee. Great for watching the world go by, literally. **Bonus:** baked goods.

**Hotties**  
**Spice Bar & Lounge, 491 N. Park St., 224-7840.**  
Where the boys are cute and the girls are cuter. The place to wear your fabulous white pants, as long as you don't mind that others will wear them too—and look a lot hotter than you. **Bonus:** chaise longue.  
—Jenny Young

*Just don't order a well drink: The patio at M*

**Marshall's patio set him back almost \$40,000. But he said the advantage it gives his bar over unporched competitors is well worth the money.**

Last month, Velio completed a \$15,000 patio renovation at the Red Door Tavern. He said the results were immediate: The new patio is constantly full.

So, unless the smokers'-rights campaigns manage to defy the odds and get the ban overturned, Columbus bar owners will continue to keep contractors busy paving the way for smokers to enjoy a drink and a cigarette.

"A patio is definitely the best investment you can make in a bar or restaurant," Velio said. "You have to give customers what they want."

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