

Foodie Profile

BARISTAS BEHIND LITTLE BIRD'S BIG LOVE

Meet the pros who brew up love in a cup. BY RHEA MAZE

SAM HUMMEL, DONNING HIS SIGNATURE SUSPENDERS, WHIPS UP AN ESPRESSO AND tops it with what's known in coffee culture as a tulip.

"That's a really good wrap, Sam," says Madisen Thomas as she admires the swirly design. The two are the veteran baristas at Little Bird Bakeshop in Old Town Square and have been beloved fixtures for Foco coffee lovers.

"See how the white ring of milk comes all the way around and pushes towards the edge of the cup? That's reflective of how well he pours," Thomas continues. "Ideally, latte art should be perpendicular to the cup's handle—there's a system to everything."



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—MADISEN THOMAS

With so many aspects to consider when making good coffee, such as dose, timing, texture, taste and aesthetics, being a quality barista requires consistency and extreme attention to detail. "It's not just a job to us—it's a craft and we treat it that way," says Hummel.

"We might make 100 drinks in a shift," adds Thomas, "but for most customers, it's their only coffee for the day—we don't want to mess up even one."

Thomas and Hummel both have several years of coffee experience under their respective belts, originally cutting their teeth as volunteer baristas at Everyday Joe's Coffee House, and became regular Little

Bird customers when owner Amy Wyatt, a professionally trained and experienced pastry chef, opened its doors in 2010.

The shop's coffee comes from Coal Creek Coffee Company in Laramie, Wyoming and all food items are made in house daily from scratch with mostly local, seasonal ingredients.

While both Thomas and Hummel are skilled and knowledgeable baristas, what they love most is connecting with people. "So many lives cross paths in a coffee shop," Hummel says. "This is a very uplifting place to work. We're not just serving customers coffee, they're friends."

Delectable baking scents waft onto the square,

Little Bird 101

Claim to fame:

Some of the best cappuccinos and flavored lattes in town; mouth-watering quiche, scones, croissants, and a rotating cast of exciting seasonal goodies.

Check out:

This winter, look for their special holiday pies, stout gingerbread made with Mr. Delicious Oatmeal Stout beer from Equinox Brewing, sugarplums, apple cider caramel, warming soups and more.

Get there:

11 Old Town Square # 121 (on the corner of Walnut and Linden)
970-568-8906
thelittlebirdbakeshop.com

attracting folks to the hub of pleasant activity inside. Not the kind of coffee shop where people camp out on computers, with its big windows, bright yellow interior, cozy seating and display of gorgeous culinary creations, the ambiance is very much about connecting. "We get a ton of couples in here—many who will stay for hours," Thomas says.

Brett Prior and Aaron Patterson round out the shop's tight-knit coffee bar team and all four baristas enjoy forming tight bonds with customers. After all, the social side of things is an important part of the whole coffee shop experience.

"We're interested in what's going on in their lives. People come back because they feel known; plus it's comfortable, cozy and everything is delicious," says Thomas. To wit: Thomas was recently serving a cappuccino to a regular who smiled, turned to his friend and said, "This is love in a cup."

We'll drink to that. ☕