



# NAUGHTY DOGS

RESTAURANT, PUB AND GRILL AIMS FOR BEST IN SHOW

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

In writing this ongoing series of articles on funny and quirky-named bars, restaurants, pubs and taverns in and around Maryland, how could I not eventually do a feature on Naughty Dogs Restaurant, Pub and Grill in Bel Air? It IS a restaurant and a pub. And it's got one of the most memorable names for an eating and drinking establishment in the state.

Owner John Roemer said in a recent interview with the Beverage Journal that the name, which he re-christened the place with when he bought the old Bull on the Beach in 2016, has nothing to do with any particular ill-behaving canine. "Our love of animals is how our name came to be!" he exclaimed. "I've always loved animals. And I believe animals can teach humans a lot, especially dogs. The actual dog on our T-shirt is Ringo, his family dog. He's named after Ringo Starr of the

Beatles."

Roemer went on to describe his business as a "local culture" bar and restaurant. Many have likened it to "Cheers," the famous TV watering hole "where everybody knows your name" that ran for years on NBC and in reruns. "Everybody seemingly knows everybody," he said. "It's in Bel Air, but it's definitely on the outskirts. So, we're more in the agricultural community. We have fresh food and great drinks, and we're very dog friendly. Our outside patio allows dogs. We also have an outside volleyball court where we do leagues and fundraisers out there."

In addition to its appeal to locals, Naughty Dogs Restaurant, Pub and Grill has become known for two things primarily, its value-priced menu and its community outreach. The menu includes such appetizers as pub nachos and crabby fries, entrees that range from fish and chips to a hot turkey dinner and the usual array of sandwiches, salads, and chicken wings. The standout section is the Naughty Dogs, a fun selection of hot dogs with such menu titles as The Jimmy Hoffa and the Dog King. And, yes, you can Create Your Own Naughty Dog.

**John Roemer**  
**owner**

**Naughty Dogs Restaurant, Pub and Grill**

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Community outreach includes the local volleyball leagues mentioned above. But Roemer and his staff really help causes and organizations close to the hearts of staff and ownership. One is the Ruritans, a service club located in numerous small towns and rural areas nationwide that focus on community service and local fellowship. He remarked, "We also work with autistic students, those who are functional and those who aren't. We supply and support them. We want to be known as a 'giving back to the community' restaurant, bar, and grill."

The beverage menu is one of the most underrated pluses of a visit to Naughty Dogs. Cocktails include such creative concoctions as the Fresh Pear Martini, the Pineapple Breeze Martini, and The O's Crush. The standout Salty Dog is made with Smirnoff Grapefruit, fresh squeezed grapefruit juice, and salt around the rim of the glass.

Roemer further noted, "We really don't do a lot of fancy stuff. That's not our clientele. We have flavored slushy machines. And we do a really good Sour Berry Vodka Lemonade. We also have a great bourbon selec-

tion. We host cigar and bourbon tastings out in the sand for Father's Day and other special events."

When asked what the favorite part of his job is, Roemer was quick to answer: "I love seeing my employees develop. I've watched so many of them grow. We're a 'stop and go' industry for the most part, especially being close to Harford County Community College. For a number of people who have worked here, it's been a short stint. If I can impact them and when they do leave, I hope they have a successful next chapter in life."

The flipside of that question is not so much the least favorite part of his job, but what does he still find challenging? Even hard? His reply:



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“Adapting to the changes in this industry is my biggest challenge. The goal has been to stay fresh, stay unique, and continue to grow sales in what’s been a struggling economy. But I believe people are bouncing back. It’s starting to grow again.”

He continued, “You’re never unable to learn. When you think you’ve learned everything, your employees will teach you something you never knew. And if you don’t listen, if you’re closed off, your business will suffer. Look at professional sports. Just because you’ve played your sport at a high level, you’ve been an All-Star, you’ll get cut if you don’t continue to grow and learn and perform.”

And for those young dogs and cats out there looking to own and operate their own place one day – any bartenders or barbacks or waiters/waitresses reading this with visions of doing what Roemer does – he offered the following stern words of wisdom: “No job

is below you in our industry. If you want to lead, you need to lead by example. From front to back, learn every piece of the business. You need to wash a dish, you need to know the whole industry to understand the industry.”

He concluded, “I track all of my sales. You

gotta watch every penny, and you better watch your markets. Your corn, your beef, etc. I keep a versatile menu so I can adapt. And I stay positive. Otherwise . . . why stay in the game? You should look forward to every day in this business!” ■

