



Justice Is Served

LARRY LAVIGNE II

It was a landmark decision: *Justice Snow's Restaurant and Bar v. the hunger and boredom of the people*. The plaintiffs-restaurateurs Michele Kiley, Marco Cingolani, and chef Jonathan Leichter, known collectively as Fiercely Local LLC-alleged that Aspenites needed a new establishment in which to gather, have fun, and enjoy delicious repasts.

The metaphor is only half in jest. Justice Snow's is located in the former Bentley's space in the city-owned and -subsidized Wheeler Opera House building. Winning the contract to open a restaurant there required Fiercely Local to plead its case to a jury of Aspen city councilmembers vis-à-vis eight other hopeful restaurateurs', and Justice Snow's victory has resulted in precedent-setting eclecticism.

Named after an Aspen justice of the peace from the late 1800s, the restaurant exudes old-timeyness. "The thirty-year-old bar from Bentley's remains, but we completely overhauled the rest of the interior," says Kiley. "We added 300-year-old oak and extinct American chestnut flooring, wine-bottle chandeliers, and live-tree window sculptures, as well as a Victorian prison sink, which graces the far end of the bar." Staff occasionally plays up the archaic aesthetic by dressing in throwback garb.

The city insisted that the restaurant be affordable, and Justice Snow's menu teems with cheap comfort food: \$6 devilish eggs, \$7 tempura pickles, a \$10 farro and quinoa salad, and a \$13 pulled pork sandwich. Even the higher-priced dishes, including Colorado trout (\$18) and lamb T-bone (\$26), don't break the bank.

The money diners save will likely find its way to the bar. "Libation liaison" and bar manager Joshua-Peter Smith has concocted a twenty-four-page cocktail list that he calls "the largest in the U.S." Each drink is a minor work of art. The Good Morning Manhattan, for example, pairs bone-marrow-infused bourbon with Nux Alpina Walnut Liqueur, maple extract, coffee bitters, and a candied bacon strip. *Mmmmm, bacon*. The bar staff makes its own original tonic-Smith has a source for quinine-as well as other drink mixers.

This is a place where drinking absinthe, of which Justice Snow's has nine varieties, both feels appropriate and is accoutered appropriately. The tableside absinthe fountain presentation comes complete with flaming sugar cubes and an ice-water drip.

This article appears in the Summer 2012 issue of Aspen Sojourner

ON NEWSSTANDS NOW



\$19.95
FOR 1 YEAR

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

ADVERTISEMENT