

ONLY IN FLORIDA: Strange But True Stories From Across the Sunshine State

JACKSONVILLE

**DOWNTOWN
COCKTAIL
CRAWL**

BEST

IN

JAX

2025

250
**Reasons Our
Readers LOVE
Living Here:**

**CUPCAKES
YOGA STUDIO
BBQ RIBS
HAIR SALON
SPORTS BAR
SUMMER CAMPS
BOWLING ALLEY
RAW BAR
MARGARITAS
COMEDY SPOT
FISH & CHIPS
CHICKEN WINGS
DOG PARK
CRAFT BREWERY
BOOK SHOPS
SUB SANDWICHES
FRIED SHRIMP
FAMILY ADVENTURE
ROOFTOP DRINKS
LUXURY MANI/PEDI
BAR BITES
& MANY, MANY MORE!**

**SPECIAL SECTION:
Northeast Florida's Leading
Wedding Services**



Intuition Ale Works



Dos Gatos



The Volstead

We'll Drink to That

DOWNTOWN'S BAR AND NIGHTLIFE SCENE IS BETTER THAN MANY BELIEVE

BY JEFFREY SPEAR

If you haven't visited Jacksonville's downtown lately, you're most definitely missing out. There are a surprising number of bars and restaurants offering a wide variety of foods, drinks and entertainment experiences, all contributing to a vibrant nightlife. To fully understand what's available, we visited some local favorites and discovered some wonderful new venues along the way.

A good place to start, especially on a balmy summer evening, is the rooftop patio at **Cowford Chophouse**. While the three-level establishment features an impressive wine list and prime cuts of beef, it's the view of the city skyline, including the Main Street bridge and St Johns River, that elevates one's cocktail. You might also enjoy the paintings of Florida's Spanish cows, created by local artist Jim Draper, that adorn the restaurant's walls. From a culinary perspective, a tasty way to begin this adventure could include Dirty Cow

martinis accompanied by duck fat cornbread and smoked salmon dip.

If you're a fan of craft cocktails, you'll want to head a few blocks west and enjoy a beverage or two at **The Volstead**. As you'd expect from this speakeasy-styled destination, there's no signage out front, only one for Snips Barber Shoppe (a working barber shop) serving as its false front. The bar itself is surreptitiously hidden behind the curtain on the shop's back wall. Once inside, you'll discover a dimly lit, surprisingly approachable barroom, complete with a large and somewhat eclectic collection of spirits, liqueurs and Amaros. While classic cocktails, including Sazeracs, Negronis and Old Fashions, are readily available, it's the seasonally presented, bespoke cocktails that are most impressive.

The next two destinations of note exist side by side as neighbors—**Intuition Ale Works**

(popular for its craft beers, especially their IPAs and stouts) and **Manifest Distilling** (known for its Florida citrus vodka, rye whiskey and organic barreled gin). To get there, it's a short drive or casual 15-minute walk heading eastward along Bay Street, passing through "The Elbow," the heart of downtown that's home to more than 20 bars, restaurants and performance venues including **Decca Live**, **Myth Nightclub**, **Underbelly**, **Bold City Downtown**, **Spliffs Gastropub** and **Island Girl Cigar Bar**; then continuing towards the baseball grounds and football stadium. You'll probably encounter the unmistakable hint of roasting coffee wafting through the air. That's the scent that emanates from the Maxwell House plant that you'll pass along the way. Just a few steps further and you've arrived at Intuition, one of the city's original craft breweries.

For beer enthusiasts, Intuition is the place to

be. With nearly 20 house-branded brews on tap, there's plenty to sample, along with a selection of familiar snacks, sandwiches and more from the kitchen. The red brick establishment covers most of a city block and also operates the Bier Hall, a live music venue. With a stellar roster of traveling bands on the calendar, the next show is usually only days away.

Manifest Distilling is right around the corner. A visit to their Cocktail Room gives you access to everything they make, including tasting flights and a specialty cocktail menu featuring some deliciously exciting creations. If you visit their website and book in advance, you can also take a tour of the distillery that includes a tutored tasting session. Considering how close the distillery (and Intuition) is to the sporting arenas, it's also a great place to meet up before or after game time.

The last stop on this crawl, heading back to the city center, is **Dos Gatos**. Established in 2009, this is one of the oldest and most respected bars in the urban core. A dark and somewhat subversive environment, Dos (as it's known to locals) is renowned for its encyclopedic wall of spirits and craft cocktail menu. Located directly across from the Florida Theater, it's ideal for drinks before or after showtimes. Better still, come for happy hour, then stick around for the DJ and dance the night away. *

