



Revival 1869 in Clayton brings cocktail culture and whiskey selection to growing Johnston County town. **Jamaal Porter of Massive Motives**

FOOD & DRINK

This bar aims to bring elegance and craft cocktails to Main Street

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CLAYTON — The velveteen covered settees, exposed brick walls, 130-bottle whiskey selection, meticulously crafted cocktails and the jazz quartet – it all just sort of screams “downtown Clayton,” doesn’t it?

It does to the co-founders of Revival 1869, a pair of Clayton newcomers who united over a shared vision for the growing Johnston County town’s future. Mike Stojic and Maleah Christie come from different worlds, but when they met as guests on a neighbor’s podcast about interesting people, they quickly realized they wanted the same thing – to create a cool but comfortable place in their adopted hometown that rose above the cornhole-and-beer-special standard to bring a little atmosphere and elegance to Main Street.

Christie, who grew up in Cary and remembers when Kildaire Farm was a farm, not a road, is an artist, writer and creative type who graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill. She equates developing Revival 1869 to working in a new medium.

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“It’s creating an experience, and I’ve always been very drawn to that,” she said. “Everyone is human no matter what experiences they’ve been through, but you can create and evoke emotion and passion for them – that’s art.”

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Stojic, a bearded, tattooed, twice-deployed former Marine captain, has a similar vision.

“It’s more than opening a bar,” he said. “I really wanted to create a wholesome, positive experience for people, where we can really come together and socialize and kind of be people again. We have

no TVs. We've created this really cool, comfortable eclectic scene where people would feel invited. ... It's a place where you can make new friends."

Along with TVs, Revival 1869 bans pre-mixed syrups, candy-flavored vodkas and reconstituted fruit juice. Christie and Stojic are doing their best to make sure the era of the educated drinker enjoys a good run in Clayton. Revival 1869 is for people who want to learn a little about cocktail culture while they imbibe.

Serving drinks like a traditional whiskey sour, which includes a shaken egg white, gives Christie a thrill.

"One of my favorite things that happens all the time is they order the whiskey sour, so we start with the fresh squeezed lemon and pour the whiskey and add the homemade sour mix, and then we crack the egg and all heads turn," Christie said. "And it's like 'What are you doing?' "

The taste of a drink so many think familiar, reinvigorated by a return to its frothy, historically accurate form, can turn a whiskey sour lover inside out.

"I've either just changed your life or ruined your life for a whiskey sour," Christie said. "It's wonderful to reintroduce it."

But their vision isn't just about mixing drinks, Stojic said.

Some of the Triangle's most popular jazz groups have spent Saturday nights at Revival, folks like Sidecar Social Club, Tin Tuxedo and Swingsters Union Band. On Wednesday nights in

August, classic films like “Breakfast at Tiffany’s” and “Some Like It Hot” flickered on the patio.

Details count, even in the bathroom, where women find flattering lighting, sweet-smelling hand lotion and feminine products. Christie says part of Revival’s appeal is catering to women, who more and more are enjoying whiskey as much or more than wine. Bring the women, and the men will follow.

“If a woman walks into the bathroom and there’s fluorescent lighting – if they walk out feeling ugly, everyone night’s over,” she said. “Women pick up on that. When a woman looks and feels beautiful and has a great experience, literally everyone within 10 feet of her has a better night.”

Revival is also about keeping money in the hyper-local economy. Clayton’s residential population is expanding, but the inclination for many is that a night on the town means crossing the Wake County line and heading to Raleigh.

“I remembered walking Main Street of downtown Clayton and I remember seeing all these headlights going either way, and I remember thinking ‘What a beautiful historic downtown, and there’s no brake lights, nobody’s stopping,’ and that just can’t be,” Christie said.

Stojic says they’ve received a pretty warm welcome from the town.

“We want to be part of it, to be a cornerstone, something that we

can all be proud of,” he said. “To be an asset to the town.”

More than anything, Stojic wants to create a respite for the world-weary.

“I saw a lot of stuff in Afghanistan and Iran,” he said. “There’s a lot of mess in the world. It’s really nice to have a place where none of that exists. That’s my driving force for this.”

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