

Where the Locals Drink



A visitor guide to neighborhood bars and pubs in Ontario County



Perhaps you have come to the Finger Lakes to explore our world-famous Rieslings and our award-winning farm-to-table fare. That's all well and good, but let's face it, sometimes a cold beer and a hefty burger are exactly what the vacation doctor calls for, with a big side of local culture. From repurposed shotgun shells turned into lighting fixtures to a view with waterfalls, here are some of the best Finger Lakes' off-the-beaten-path watering holes.

The Green Front

35 Niagara Street, Canandaigua, 14424

585-394-7015

thegreenfrontrestaurant.com

Why go there: From old photos and newspaper articles to signage from long-gone businesses, there are so many "blasts from Canandaigua's past" in this bar that you'd think the local historical society annexed the joint.

Why people used to go there: To drink. Illegally. The Green Front originally opened in 1928 as the Italian-American Restaurant, but it doubled as a speakeasy until Prohibition was lifted in 1933. Booze-thirsty locals code-named it The Green Front (because the front of the building was green—how clever) and the name stuck, eventually becoming the bar's legal moniker. The building is still green.

What else you should know: The food is a little bit of a throwback too. Vintage bar food that has an undeniable Finger Lakes ring. Hamburgers or fried bologna "on the heel" (that's code for the end of a loaf of French bread). In addition to the fine selection of local craft beers, everything you used to steal from your dad's budget canned beer collection is here.



Middletown Tavern

183 South Main Street, Naples, 14512

585-374-6550

visitfingerlakes.com/listings/middletown-tavern/193/

Why go there: Look up at the ceiling and you'll see how a former employee repurposed used shotgun shells from patrons as lighting fixtures. She went on to a career in health care, not interior decorating.

A little history with that beer: The town that is now Naples used to be called Middletown prior to 1808. Middletown Tavern has been around for a long time, but not quite that long (since the 1980s).

Transportation alternatives: Depending on the season, you'll likely find snowmobiles and motorcycles in the parking lot. (Middletown is a popular stop for the Honeoye Hill & Riders Snowmobile Club) How you get here is up to you.

Best nights for wings? On Saturdays and Wednesdays chicken wings are discounted. Load up.



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Finger Lakes



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Victor Village Inn

34 East Main Street, Victor, 14564

585-924-5025

victorvillageinn.com

Why go there: Victor Village Inn may not be the only Cleveland Browns bar in the region, but it tries hard to be the most spirited.

Best day to go to verify this fact: On Sundays during football season.

And if you don't like football? There's pool, karaoke (call for the schedule), darts and chicken wings with your choice of 22 sauces.

What can you drink? Anything from locally brewed craft beers to tried-and-true national brands.



Vonnie's Boathouse Bar & Grille

4446 West Lake Road/State Route 14, Geneva, 14456

315-789-2585

facebook.com/vonnies.boathouse

Why go there: Located in a sparsely populated stretch of state road, Vonnie's is known as "the neighborhood bar without the neighborhood." The space is small and intimate, and it's easy to make friends here.

How small? You probably have more bottled beer choices than seat options.

What other diversions are there? Pool, darts, and trivia on Thursday nights.

Signature menu items? Everyone seems to love the Boathouse Burger, but the chicken wings and pizza are also popular. Bargain hunters take note: wings are discounted on Wednesdays, pizza on Mondays. Vonnie's Blueberry Muffin cocktail is legendary.

Is there really a boat on site? No, but across the road there's Seneca Lake and a marina. Vonnie's has embraced the spirit of being on the water with a boat-shaped bar and inner "dinghy" to hold the liquor inventory.



Buffalo Bill's Family Restaurant and Tap Room

19 West Main Street, Shortsville, 14548

585-289-4104

buffalobill.biz

Why go there: Because Buffalo Bill's isn't afraid to mix metaphors. The locals describe it as a "mom and pop Irish pub that landed on a Western saloon ... in the Finger Lakes." It also has crazy-good jambalaya.

Football haven? Wild West showman? No, Buffalo Bill's is neither a sports bar nor a rodeo show. The owner just happens to be named Bill, and he's from Buffalo. His wife works there too. Her name is Robin.

What will you experience there that you probably can't experience anywhere else?

Show up for Songwriters in the Side Room, a monthly concert series that highlights Finger Lakes musicians performing original songs. Sorry, no Lady GaGa sing-alongs.



Water Side Wine Bar

125 Main Street, Phelps 14532

585-752-1634

visitfingerlakes.com/listings/water-side-wine-bar/359

Why go there: This is a wine bar where they will be nice to you whether you're a wine connoisseur or not. Plus, all the wines are \$7 a glass, which makes the math a lot easier if you're ordering in a group.

But what if you're drinking buddies crave beer? Beer lovers are welcome here too. In fact, there are several beers on tap and more by the bottle. Have a pint on site or grab a growler to go.

What if we arrive hungry? Order some trendy yet reasonably priced small plates and dinners from Water Side's talented kitchen crew. The house smoker puts out some fine brisket.

What other fine distractions are on site? Water Side offers a great view of the Flint Creek waterfalls. A few nights a week local musicians perform.

When the weather is warm: Take that intermingling to the waterside patio tables and lounge chairs and fire pit under the trees. And order a fine pie from the seasonal outdoor pizza oven.

When the weather is cold: Two fireplaces await you inside.

