

## Smoking now on tap in beer gardens



By Steve Bittinger

**Sherry Marino of Bartlett, with her husband Lou, smokes a cigarette in the beer garden at the Bartlett Tavern and Grill. Because she's seated 15 feet away from the grill's front door, Marino's smoking abides with the Illinois smoking ban.**

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By Claire Zillman  
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Bartlett, IL -

Beer gardens aren't just for beer anymore.

Local businesses have discovered that beer gardens are havens for smoking customers, who have been exiled from restaurants and bars since the Jan. 1 smoking ban prohibited smoking in public places.

"Thank God for beer gardens," said John Dwyer, owner of the Bartlett Tavern and Grill in Bartlett.

When the smoking ban was enacted at the beginning of the year, Dwyer's restaurant took a hit.

"It was the worst I'd seen business in 30 years," he said.

But business has picked up of late. When Dwyer made his seasonal beer garden smoker-friendly in June, his smoking customers returned the favor. They flocked to the beer garden where they could eat and drink without having to leave the restaurant premises to light up a cigarette as they'd been forced to do during the winter.

Dwyer said the smoking ban hurt the atmosphere of his bar early in the year. At any given time, Dwyer said about a quarter of his bar's patrons were outside in front of his restaurant, where smoking is legal.

"The party never got started," he said. "People were always leaving to go have a smoke."

Leah Vaden, manager of Pub 222 in St. Charles, said her business also took a hit after the smoking ban was enacted.

"Instead of staying after dinner to have another drink and a cigarette, people would just leave because they couldn't smoke inside," Vaden said. "They would end up buying fewer drinks."

Dwyer said that with the opening of the beer garden, his restaurant's atmosphere has improved, and so has business.

"People are staying around longer," he said. "Everyone stays put in the beer garden and drinks, eats, smokes and has conversations without interruption."

The Illinois smoking ban permits smoking near a restaurant or bar as long as smokers stand at least 15 feet from the building's entrance. By sitting in a beer garden or outdoor patio, customers can smoke, and the restaurant or bar still is in compliance with the law.

Peter Milligan, owner of the Filling Station in St. Charles, painted an arc on the cement floor of his beer garden 15 feet away from the building's back door. Smoking is legal in the area outside the arc.

Milligan said his restaurant's beer garden is a compromise between smokers and nonsmokers. His smoking customers appreciate his beer garden because it allows them to smoke after a meal or while having a drink, but because the smoke blows away immediately, his nonsmoking patrons aren't inconvenienced.

Maryann Andrews, a nonsmoker from Bartlett, sat at a table in the Filling Station's beer garden with five friends, two of who were smoking.

"I like the smoking ban, but when I'm sitting outside, I really don't notice if people around me are smoking or not," she said.

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