

SIMPLE SYRUP



an etcetera coffeehouse publication

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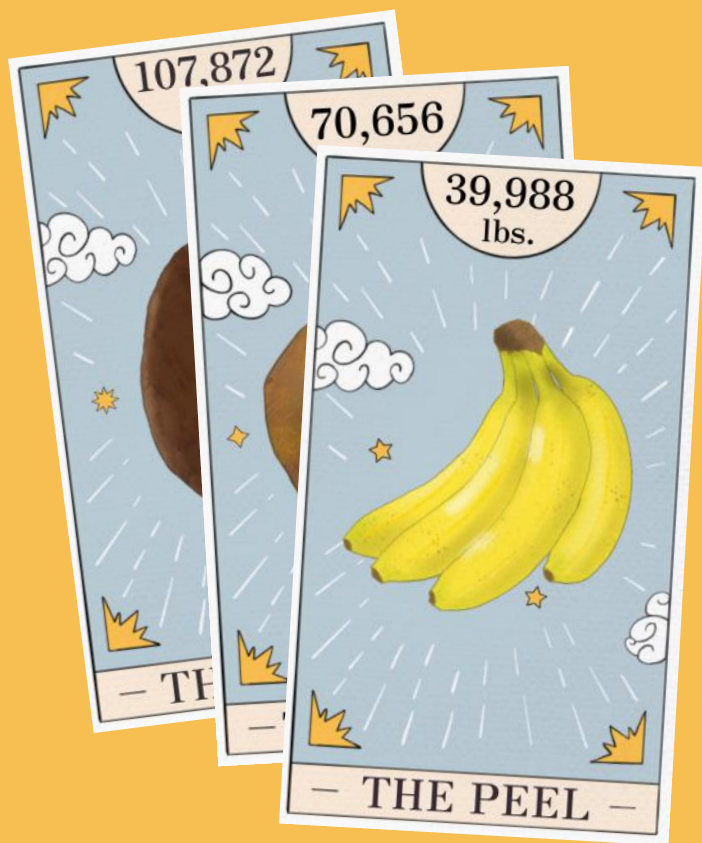
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Warning! Please be advised that this publication contains uncensored adult language and discusses mature concepts. It may not be suitable for all readers. The MPAA would give it a PG-13, probably, idk.

data arcana



If you want to feel tired and in need of some coffee, just look at the numbers on the tops of these cards. They represent Etcetera's lifetime total usage of each item. Twenty years in business, open seven days a week. A second location since 2010. More than 325,000 hours of work and over \$4,000,000 in payroll. At least eight staplers. The big picture elevates the little day to day things into the crazy and impressive totals they really are. These aren't the type of tarot cards that will tell anyone's future, but please enjoy this snapshot of Etcetera's present statistics, plus a few of my memories of the shop's past along the way.



letter from the editor

-toney little, co-owner

Hundreds of times a day at Etcetera Coffeehouse, a measured amount of Peace Coffee's Black Squirrel dark roast is ground, tamped, and extracted from a La Marzocco Linea PB triple group espresso machine. I myself have repeated this process tens of thousands of times over an 18-year career that will likely continue for at least that long again. I've clocked more than twenty-seven thousand hours, more than enough to be an "expert" almost three times over. Not that I'd consider myself one-- far from it. Truly, I can't even say I'm an enthusiast (that title is on Levi's business card). A professional, maybe, but sometimes I'm not sure I deserve that title either. I've had serious lows in the coffeehouse. I've lost my head and made serious mistakes. I've had confrontations and been so close to quitting or being let go. One time I



crashed out on a kid for something so trivial that trying to explain why it sent me would be pointless. (Sorry again, Gavin, my shame and embarrassment for being an asshole to you that night has not receded.) Suffice to say, I don't look back at the time I've spent at 320 N. 6th Street with any delusions of having ascended to great heights or having changed the world.

That being said, -my- world has certainly changed. I was hired here in April of 2009 at 19 years old. Like a lot of the people who've been employed by the coffeehouse over the years, I had only a vague idea about who I would become. I was a little lost, and extremely broke. I was on that common young adult knife's edge between wondering if I should be disappointed in myself for not aspiring to more, or impressed with myself for at least staying alive while enjoying my newfound freedom. Etcetera provided a stable income for the first time since graduation, and something to focus on in an environment that I was fully enamored with. The youngest employee at the time, I was thankful to be influenced by people who informed me that coffee could be made a career if you so desired and who also had strong feelings about where they drew the line between friend and co-worker; that is to say, there is no line. Not given family, or corporate wage-theft "family," but chosen family. Being hired to work at Etcetera is like being inducted into a member's only club or a biker gang: instant acceptance for who you are, backup when life has you by the collar, and a handful of sometimes corny unspoken rules. We've stood together at shows, parties, protests, funerals, and weddings (in some cases

even at the altar). We cover for and go out of our way for each other as a matter of course. Our Christmas party has been the highlight of my holiday for 18 years straight.

The benefits are not entirely clubhouse perks, however. I've gained countless friendships, connections, and opportunities to make a difference in my community because of the great number of beautiful people who are generous enough to count themselves among our customers. I know my co-workers would tell you the same. And you know as customers that there's much more to find on our pick-up counter than just your order. I spent a month or two last year before our annual year-end party talking to customers during my float shifts and asking them what they're getting from Etcetera, after they've gotten their latte and friendship bread. The overwhelming theme of the responses was: environment. It's community and network, a space to be alone, a space to develop friendships, to study, to learn more about themselves or about the things going on within our city. They enjoy our baristas knowing their names, taking interest in their lives, and celebrating achievements with them. They told me about how many people on the staff that they know personally, which made them feel welcomed, comfortable, and safe.



When I pitched the idea to create a magazine for Etcetera's 20th birthday, I had a pretty clear picture in my head of what I wanted it to look like, both figuratively and literally. I wanted a 'zine format to display all the little in-jokes and artwork we've collected and created over the years. I also wanted to have space for some longer-form writing from the creative employees and customers we're so fortunate to have. I sought out a few folks to write articles from their unique perspectives about subjects that pertain to "third spaces" like our shop. I asked that they write about the general coffee shop impact, not specifically Etcetera. I was very conscious that this publication could become an endless pat on the back to us, from us. I wanted a magazine/history/yearbook, not a love letter. In that aim, I believe I've missed the mark.

In editing Simple Syrup I've confirmed what I think I already knew-- that my story of Etcetera isn't dissimilar to the stories of our customers or employees. This place changes lives, much like it did my own. It's so much more than a brick-and-mortar coffee shop. Alissa Cooper tells in her letter of the group of 8 mothers for whom Etcetera is the "backdrop of the memories of our friendship forever." It's a "constant reminder of the positive influence small businesses can have in a community," as Derek Operle so kindly writes in his submission. It's a "veritable Ship of Theseus" as Travis Russell eloquently puts it in his article, its culture changing as it allows everyone involved to add and take away their own piece. I agree with all of those assessments.



Again, I'm not expert, but I've spent half my life here and I can say with confidence that Etcetera deserves a pat on the back. I love this shop, I love the people in it, and it's helped me to love myself. It's clear to me that our community loves us too. Here's to 20 years of Etcetera Coffeehouse, and may it see 20 more.



An absolutely gargantuan thank you goes to Kennedy Caldwell for single-handedly laying out this publication! Kennedy is a graphic designer based in Paducah and a former Etcetera employee. She can design a ~70-page magazine in a month and she's a world-class dog mom, a championship level yapper (she even has her own podcast: Mutually Assured Discussion, @madpod.ky, wherever you get your podcasts) and a beautiful person, and is my friend! Check Pookie out @hostilecakeovr and if you see her in the shop, buy her an iced americano.





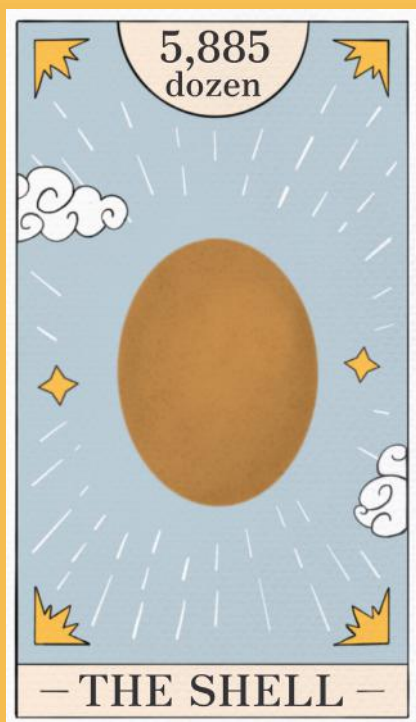
Allan Brhoads.



whos muggles is dis



Just makin lattes



eggs

You want the quiche recipe?

Here's your reward for reading the fine print. Take 4 eggs, $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, a dash of nutmeg, 4 big handfuls of shredded cheese, and about two cups of whatever else you want to fill it with. Mix it all up, preferably with a nice big dinner fork. Pour that into a pie crust and bake for 30 minutes at 425 degrees.

Good luck.



bananas

The most bananas ever purchased in a single shopping trip was 36 pounds' worth. Did you know a bunch of bananas is called a "hand," and they grow upwards from the stem? Or that the variety of banana we commonly eat today is the Cavendish, which (following a mid-20th century global banana disease) replaced the reportedly superior tasting and now extinct Gros Michel variety? Why, of all possible places, is Fulton the banana capital of the world? Anyway, that's an overwhelming number of bananas.



the beginning of etcetera

-johanna rhodes

It was the second Saturday in March 2005. Allan and I decided to drive down to Lower Town to have lunch at Café Minou, a place daughter Jean was working. We had read about the “artist relocation program” taking place there and figured we could combine lunch with visiting some of the art galleries.

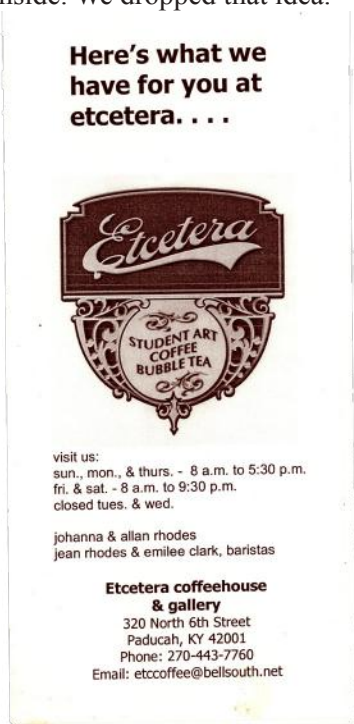
We had a light lunch, introduced ourselves to Jean’s boss—Chef Denise Gordon—chatted briefly and made our exit. My only recollection about the galleries we stopped at was that the first one was the Mark Palmer Gallery on the corner of 6th and Harrison. We found Mark’s non-representational art compelling and found Mark even more interesting. Coming from Washington, D.C., he had been in hotel hospitality and was, in a word, “charismatic.” As we walked along the streets of Lower Town, stepping into this gallery and that, I began to feel the vibe of the transformed area. Finally, I said to

Allan, “I’d like to move down here, become a part of all this.” Although my dutiful husband paused and said, “I guess we could,” he tempered that with “but we’re not artists.”

I can be impulsive at times, and this was one of those times. We were “empty-nesters,” both had jobs at Paducah Tilghman High School, and I was reaching a burnout stage in teaching. “Well,” I said, thinking quickly, “We could open a coffee shop and student art gallery.” Allan’s reply was, “Hmmm.” Later he told me he was thinking, but not saying, “That’s the dumbest idea I’ve heard

in a long time.” We walked back to our car and left Lower Town. The “impulsive idea” didn’t leave me, however, and I brought it up again. Allan indulged me. My thought was that we could sell coffee and display student artwork. Tilghman art teacher Ruth Baggett thought it was a grand idea.

First, we inquired about the availability of the Buddenbaum house at 618 Monroe, owned by the First Presbyterian Church. It could be leased, but the electricity had to be upgraded, and we'd have to foot the bill. Then, there was remodeling inside. We dropped that idea.



Next, we talked with Paducah city planner Tom Barnett who told us we could try for a Lower Town property even though we weren't artists. All we had to do was submit a proposal. Now, the serious business began.

Looking around Lower Town, we settled on the old Roth Funeral Home parking lot at 320 North 6th Street, a blank piece of asphalt.

Pulling out graph paper at home, we used pencil and ruler to sketch out a 2-story building, 32-feet by 62-feet. We would have a coffeehouse downstairs along with a student art gallery, and we would live upstairs, just like shopkeepers from the early part of the last century, the time period we saw reflected in other Lower Town buildings.



We turned in our proposal to Urban Renewal which awarded the properties. We asked planning director Tom Barnett what would happen if an artist wanted the same property. He laughed at us. We were soon informed that 320 North 6th Street was ours. Barnett and Mark Barone, artist relocation coordinator, recommended D and D Construction, headed by Mark Bladon, as possible builders for us since they were currently involved in two other Lower Town builds.

**"320 North
6th Street
was ours."**

Other than our project being third in line with D and D, ground-breaking, err asphalt-breaking, began in summer 2005. I designed the living space upstairs, again on graph paper, and we looked to Jean to design the coffeehouse since she had worked in several coffee operations, including Espresso Royale in Boston, MA. Mark Bladon transformed our graph paper plans into blueprints. Allan looked to model train books to design the front of the building to look like a turn-of-the century building.

I quit my teaching job so I could be at the building site every day. This also gave me time to plan for something I had no knowledge of—how to run a coffee business and most importantly, how to operate an espresso machine and tamp a portafilter of coffee, all new to me.

Our accountant was incredulous. He advised us to subscribe to some (coffee) industry publications so we could seem “legit.” He said this after I told him I envisioned sitting at the counter with my laptop and making three cups of coffee a day. Allan and I did go to Bongo Java coffee company in Nashville for an afternoon “crash course” at the espresso machine. We were convinced we could make a latte, if we had to!

What would we call the coffeehouse? At first, I suggested Le Chat Noir (The Black Cat), based on some Steinlen

prints featuring black cats that I bought in a gallery in Alexandria, VA. But Chef Denise Gordon who had become a friend asked us not to use the name because Café Minou (Café Kitty) was just around the corner. So, next I came up with “Etcetera.” I liked the sound of it. “Etcetera, Etcetera. Etcetera!” immortalized by Yul Brenner in the stage play My Fair Lady. “Etcetera” seemed like a name with endless possibilities.

**“Etcetera” seemed
like a name
with endless
possibilities.”**

Allan and I moved in upstairs in September 2006 and set about with Jean’s advice and the help of our first employee, Emilee Clark, to decorate our space and order supplies and fixtures. We added “bubble tea” to the menu because Jean had also worked in a “bubble tea” shop in Boston, and she predicted it would sell well in Paducah.

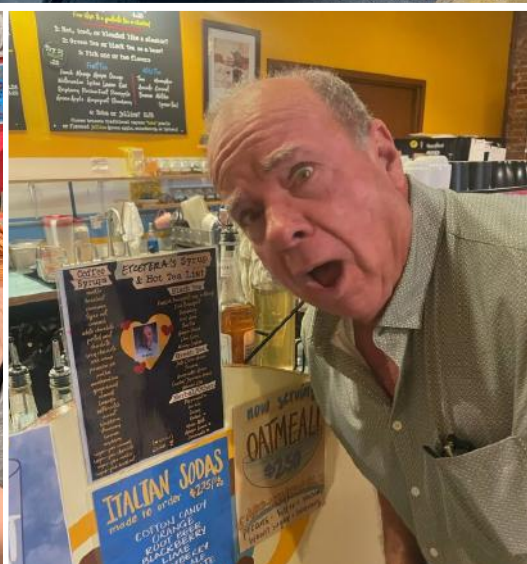
On October 14, 2006, a sunny second Saturday in Lower Town, Etcetera Coffeehouse and Student Art Gallery opened its doors to the public for the very first time.





ice cream

If I ever successfully made it in and out of Kroger without a stranger deciding that they just couldn't resist saying something about the 30 gallon-size buckets of vanilla ice cream in my cart, I would have immediately bought myself a lottery ticket. They ALWAYS said something. Usually the rhetorical "*That's a lot of ice cream*" (I mean, objectively, sure? Glad you can count?) or the asinine "*Ya havin' a party? I want to go!*" (Actually, I'm going back to work to do payroll taxes, and you're not invited to that either.) One time it was the absolutely cursed "*You're going to get fat if you eat all that, you know!*" (First of all, 30 entire gallons of ice cream isn't much of a meal plan, but more importantly, **THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.**) At the end of the day I guess the heckling was worth it. Using ice cream instead of some powder mix really is what makes the frozen lattes so good.





A glitch in the matrix?

-derek operle

A black cat twitches and walks across a hallway. A few seconds later, another one — seemingly the same cat, with the exact same twitch — meows as it crosses the screen. Déjà vu, Trinity tells Neo in the Wachowski sisters' 1999 masterpiece "The Matrix," is usually "a glitch" in the simulated reality (itself named The Matrix) that the Machines have imprisoned nearly all of humanity in for centuries.

These glitches are things we notice. Happenings just strange enough to make us sit up and take notice of our world — its strangeness, its limits, and its possibilities.

A crispy DVD copy of "The Matrix," muted and playing on an eternal, wonderful loop has greeted everyone who's walked into the 6th Street Etcetera since the days of COVID-19. I've lost count of the number of times I've seen Neo learn kung fu and dodge bullets while waiting on my order, and it's always a treat to catch Morpheus offering up the red and blue pills or Trinity kicking everyone's ass in the lobby shootout.

That eerie, wonderful sensation of déjà vu that happens when people feel like they see the same thing on the screen when they visit the shop isn't unique to me. Co-owner Levi McDuffee said what felt like a bug at first has turned

into a feature where people sense the loops they're on in their lives. People buy coffee and go about their days, rinse and repeat. "It's like, 'Are you in the Matrix because you see it every time?'" he said.

Levi remembers the film becoming a kind of cinematic yule log for the shop pretty much by accident. "It just happened to be that movie," he said. Even though they popped the disc in on a lark, the staff has stood by it ... despite briefly flirting with the idea of switching to "Shrek 2." They've had to swap out the disc a time or two, along with the TV, and the player. There's been times when the disc freezes — once it got timestuck as Neo, surprised at a suggestion by the Oracle, says, "It couldn't just be a coincidence."

For me, the film, a story about how people can come together to survive assaults by threshing, unyielding, inhuman machines — is a near perfect analogue for Etcetera.

The employee-owned coffee shop has had to battle the deadly and uncaring forces of capitalism, a pandemic, and even the rise of single-serve coffee machines, among other economic forces. For two decades now, Etcetera has provided a place for people to wake themselves up, to catch up with an old friend, to read the newspaper, to cram for a test, to organize, to sing, read poetry, to experience art, to unwind, to raise money for a good cause, to warm

ourselves with a hot drink on a cold day, and to be ourselves. In a world where actual artificial intelligences are threatening the livelihoods of so many and where so many corporate conglomerates operate without compassion, Etcetera is the outlier, a glitch in the Matrix. The shop is a constant reminder of the positive influence small businesses can have in a community. It's a wake up call, rallying western Kentuckians — and just about anyone with a beating heart — to come together as humans over coffee, tea, smoothies, or even a ginger lemonade. It doesn't matter what you drink, it matters that you show up for your neighbors.

The Machines and our beloved Etcetera do share one thing though: They're both powered by people. "Etcetera ... we own it but it's never felt like a business," Levi said. "It feels like a person, a collective consciousness that exists on its own — kind of like the Matrix."





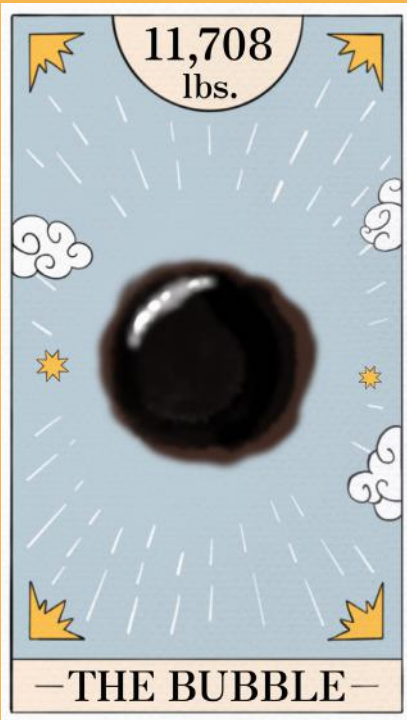
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etcetera coffeehouse mug, stolen from Paducah, Kentucky bistro

boba/jellies

I stayed up most of the night before our grand opening in 2006 trying and failing to construct a giant boba mascot costume out of dark purple velour and a bunch of hula hoops. As the first bubble tea shop in Western KY, we assumed people would think we were insane for putting chewy things in a drink and then never try it for themselves. Clearly, though, there was nothing to worry about.



honey

Making your smoothies and honey cinnamon breves sweet and delicious has been the life's work of approximately 13.5 million bees. Now that I think about it, you could say that's been part of the life's work of approximately 50 Etcetera employees over the last 20 years, too. I guess I never knew we had so much in common.







quietly brewing democracy

-michael mcvicker

For twenty years, Etcetera hasn't just been pouring coffee in LowerTown; it has been quietly brewing democracy. In a society that increasingly demands we buy a ticket just to exist in public, this shop stands as a radical, welcoming alternative. It is a true "third space"—a sanctuary outside of work and home where the price of admission is simply your shared humanity. They ask only that we trust them to take leaps of faith, branching out from "the usual" to build something profoundly different from the heavily commercial, cookie-cutter chains that dominate our modern landscape. When you walk through those doors, you aren't just a consumer; you are stepping into a vibrant community ecosystem. You see it immediately in the uncensored flyer window, the cost-free meeting spaces, and the local art transforming

the walls into a gallery of LowerTown's soul. You see it when grassroots organizers and political candidates stand shoulder-to-shoulder with artists, teachers, and neighbors, turning a bustling cafe into an impromptu town hall. Whether it's a local coalition brainstorming their next step, a women's group weekly meeting, or candidates listening to the unfiltered voices of our community, Etcetera proves that real political change doesn't start in a sterile office. It starts right here in our community, over a genuinely good, ethically sourced cup of coffee, surrounded by people who care.

But perhaps the most profound politics of Etcetera happen behind the counter. By operating as a democratically-run, pro-worker business, they prove every single day that commerce does not require exploitation.

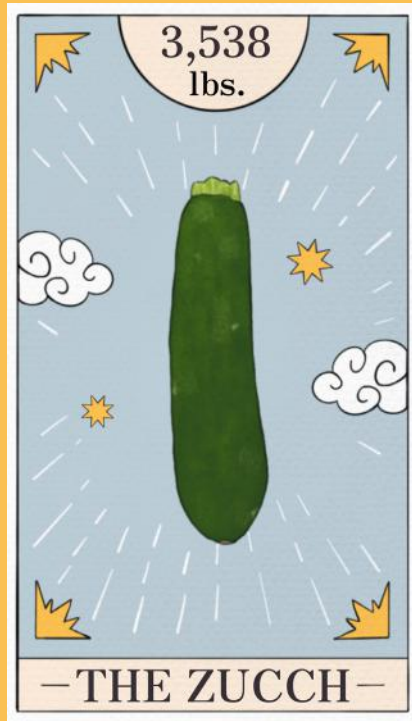
They cap wage gaps, ensure everyone—from the newest hire to the owners—scrubs the toilets, and fiercely protect their employees’ dignity over a quick profit. There is no autocracy here, no “because we pay the bills.”

Instead, there is a promise that an employee is always more valuable than any one customer. In an era obsessed with bottom lines, choosing to take a profit cut to support other local businesses, while prioritizing organic and fair-trade ingredients, is a revolutionary act of economic defiance.

As a father raising two toddlers right here in Paducah, finding public spaces that genuinely welcome us is incredibly rare. Etcetera provides an environment where we are served

without prejudice, where my kids can learn what a positive human interaction looks like, and where our presence isn’t seen as an inconvenience. It is a place that feels as comfortable as our own living room, yet deeply connects us to the wider world. Etcetera is far more than a coffee shop. It is a living, breathing manifesto of what our community can be when we choose people over profit, local over corporate, and each other over everything else. Here is to twenty years of the most important room in town, and to the beautiful, crazy family business that built it.





zucchini

The zucchini bread recipe came from Johanna's aunt Sally, and if you don't have the correct DNA it's just not going to turn out the same. Many have tried and failed. The recipe is 60% recipe, 30% vibes, 5% blatant misinterpretation, and 5% luck. I can't even write it down accurately because of all the instructions like "Fill up the sifter with flour twice, but one time not as full as the other." Yes, I know some people think it's a bummer that the zucchini bread era is a thing of the past. Call us selfish if you want, but Johanna and I feel it's okay that this one thing is going to stay just ours.



Etcetera is more than just a building. More than a location. More than a coffee shop. It's a companion that I have found myself always able to go back to, and it never lets me down. It's seen me at my worst and at my best. From heartache to happiness. It's a safe, warm place. It's a community. I moved to Paducah in 2020 for my job, six months out of college. Aside from a few trips here and there, I didn't become a regular until 2023. It was May, and I had a first date scheduled at Etcetera. I remember walking in nervously, scanning the menu but not being able to retain much. Shortly my date walked in and we introduced ourselves. It was an unseasonably chilly day, but we sat outside. Why wouldn't you? Of course, Vinny jumped into my lap almost the minute we sat down. I loved how sweet and friendly he was – almost like he knew we needed something to start our conversation. It was my first time sitting out back, and I was loving it already.

Following the start of this new relationship, Etcetera saw what had been some of the most joyful days of my life thus far.

When it turned out that the person I thought was the love of my life was not, Etcetera also saw what were some of my hardest, most painful, confusing, hopeless days. Vinny comforted me. Friendly faces made me smile and forget, if only for a brief moment. Some days I could barely converse without feeling like I'd fall apart, and coming to the shop provided the reset I needed to continue my day. The solitude of the patio gave me the time and space to be alone with my thoughts. On the morning of one of these particularly hard days, a coworker happened to offer me an Emilee (with oat milk) that had been an extra that day on his daily trip to the shop. It lifted my spirits, and the Emilee even became my favorite custom creation.

Things eventually got easier, as they often do. The bleak memories, thankfully, did not taint my view of the sacred place I had grown to love – there were too many positive ones. It had been there to comfort me, both when I felt alone and when I wanted to be alone.

During my multiple trips each week, I started seeing co-workers, my customers, friends I'd gained from other activities, and even those I'd come to know just from the shop, whether it be fellow patrons (Looking at you, Tim!) or friendly employees. Those connections always brightened my day and made me realize that maybe, just maybe, everything would be okay and there was so much more to discover.

With background noise of birds, friendly conversation, cars driving by, kids playing, and sometimes just the leaves rustling in the wind, I worked on projects. My involvement with the community grew, and Etcetera was a space where I could contribute to this and accomplish tasks without much distraction. I formed playlists for my next social event. Chipped away at articles I'd begun writing for a local publication. Made social media posts. Recorded financial activity for a club I'm still the treasurer of. Looked at houses for sale and talked with my realtor about them, learning more

about the process each time. Called my parents for financial advice. Wrote a letter to a dear friend when she moved away. Sat under the blue and red umbrellas to write this very story. All of it done in this space. It has seen change after change in my life. Though our paths crossed at varying stages, I feel as though I have grown with it, and it with me.



While I've only been privy to Etcetera for a few short years, it feels like much longer. Without this space, I would've missed out on countless moments of joy, healing, peace, connection, stillness, creativity, and growth. Not only that – their love for their customers, for Paducah, for its people, and for other local businesses constantly shines through and remains at the forefront. I love living in a place where businesses like this exist and help improve its community while welcoming any and all kinds of folks with open arms. Cheers to twenty years, Etcetera. Thank you for being more than just a building.





bagels

I was the one who suggested we buy Kirchhoff's bagels to sell instead of regular old grocery store ones, so I was the one sent over to make a deal. This was about 2007 and I was absolutely shaking in my Keds. I'm, what, 19 years old and I have to go haggle over wholesale bagel pricing with a Real Businesswoman? As it turned out, Ginny was as kind as she was capable, and so was the rest of the crew. On top of that, even after 70,656 of them, the bagels are still delicious.



my life in the coffee cult

-travis russell

In London, in order to drive the iconic black cab, taxi drivers must pass what is called "*The Knowledge*," an exam that comprises the entirety of the dense network of landmarks and streets within a 6-mile radius of Charing Cross, the historical center (or centre, if you're REALLY fond of black tea) of London. By doing this, the human lives in a reciprocal relationship with the man-made construction around him, becoming both a living geopositioning system and a witness to architecture's changes. We not only experience buildings as they are, a static example of mankind's ingenuity and the silent messages beamed from the vision of their constructors, but also in the inverse: we shape and interpret the architecture based on who we are at the time we experience it. It is a lens into our own understanding of the world around us. The bulk of my adult life has been built, destroyed, rebuilt, and irrevocably altered in my own area of "*The Knowledge*," the 6 square blocks on either side of Etcetera.



Over time, nearly every intersection, business, bar (especially the bars), and certain homes and apartment blocks have been sites of major life experiences. The quiet, day-by-day surety that these buildings and this world will be there tomorrow causes us all to unconsciously take for granted how enmeshed we are in the tapestry of our own neighborhoods.

It's 1:00 PM on July 4th and I, as I have for nearly a decade, am heading through the back door of Kirchhoff's Bakery after a shift at Etcetera Squared. This time, I'll be taking the long, winding back way to my home in Midtown via bicycle. This is an incredibly questionable choice, as the heat index is at 102 degrees, and I've only consumed around 4 cups of iced coffee and *zero* cups of water. I've weighed the convenience of not having to navigate my car through the holiday crowd against the heat and chosen badly, as there is no holiday crowd quite yet due to the fact that it is, again, 102 degrees under an oppressive, cloudless sky. Drenched in sweat and feeling my age, I take a moment to look out over the river and repeat a favorite, well-trodden refrain to myself: *"Why do I still do this?"* I have a weekday office job in air conditioning and almost eerily quiet comfort far away from the constant stimulation, noise, and chatter of the coffee shop. I have a bachelor's degree. I even have an employer 401K match, for God's sake!

The conditions of my life are very different from when I started the job if I track them on a chart as an academic exercise, yet it also feels like the blink of an eye. It's come as a surprise to employees and patrons alike, but Etcetera has been in business for 20 years. Our longevity is

a testament to the (literal) chemical bonds that draw both groups in daily.

In 2016 I entered Etcetera as a young man still searching for a way to even begin to find his way in the world. College was to that point a bust (I, similarly to Morissey, gave up education as a bad mistake). I worked double shifts, either mornings or afternoons serving lattes, with the alternating shifts spent helping to buoy my family business as my father's health deteriorated, burning myself out in the process.



But this was 2016, the steep nadir of the Obama-era liberal optimism in the western-led new order.

It was soon to transition to the first days of the decidedly more cartoonish and goofy first term of the Trump presidency (as opposed to today's darker second round). The palpable sense of impending change in my life was exciting but also trepidatious as the political and cultural climate began to shift in a decidedly more conservative and reactionary direction.

Etcetera has, in its aim to serve musicians, artists, high school and college students, and general left-leaning weirdos, faced occasional ribbing and the reputation of a center of “liberal” culture in Paducah. Prior to the at-scale spread of boutique coffee in the mid 2010s, the stereotype of the “coastal elite latte-sipping liberal Prius driver” was the immediate image conjured by the idea of a coffee shop in the minds of a certain subsection of America. But in reality, this isn’t a new concept (or criticism). To be certain, we’re a ways away from 1633’s ban of coffee in the Ottoman Empire by Sultan Mehmed IV, who, as legend has it, posed as a patron in underground coffee shops and personally meted out death to those who partook. After coffee’s spread reached continental Europe and to the British Isles, England’s coffee shops became centers of political plotting, rebellion, and discourse. For a penny, anybody could wander in, enjoy debate, caffeine-fueled pontificating, and a warm respite from the perpetually dour English cityscape. This, of course, proved popular for the eternally broke college student. The coffeeshop’s reputation as a haven for sissyboys shines through in 1677’s *The Women’s Petition Against Coffee*, a pamphlet that (reputedly written as a sarcastic piece by a group of men)

pleaded for men to avoid the perils of coffee, which had rendered them as impotent, effeminate, and uninterested “apostates of the good old primitive ways of Ale-Drinking.” Not too far off from what my family in Ballard County said four and a half centuries later! Joke or not, the document spoke to the anxieties that the explosive growth in coffee drinking brought to English society.



Stepping behind the confines of Etcetera’s front counter and onto its espresso-caked floor mats to begin learning the trade was an extraordinarily chaotic, loud, and viscerally confusing, yet gratifying experience. As a through-and-through mid 2000s second wave coffee shop, Etcetera has never attempted to shy away from the vibrantly painted walls, tchotchke-adorned shelves and ledges, and dark

optics of pretentiousness that come with the territory, the shop is a throwback to a period in which the consumer began to search for coffee in its own right, rather than as a supplementary item to a larger menu. The true goal, I quickly learned, was to be a coffee shop for the everyman; the quirkiness should endear the customer to you, not serve as a barrier they must overcome to even speak to you.

My entrance into the Etcetera story came during a period of massive change for the business itself, as well as the neighborhood at large. Etcetera's conceptual identity is inexorably linked with Lower Town.

In the early 2000s, local residents and working artists formed an idea for urban renewal in Paducah's oldest neighborhood, which had suffered from disinvestment and population loss as much of the commercial and residential heart of the city packed their bags for the county as development ramped up in the west side of town. The idea: pitch the neighborhood as a budget-friendly destination for artists and provide incentives for them to renovate existing/build new commercial and housing stock. Ten years before I started, Etcetera was purpose-built to be a community third space for this burgeoning redevelopment. In the present, as an established business, higher management (or as high as you can be in a horizontally-run

workplace) had to grapple with true business concerns. Though the hopes of a living art colony in Lower Town diminished, the neighborhood was gentrifying and centralizing into a tourist destination, neighborhood for downtown restaurant employees, and business corridor. Sales increased year on year.



Mao Zedong

For me, working in Lower Town was an extraordinarily micro version of what many 18-21 year olds experience moving out of their provincial towns and into major, walkable areas of colleges and major cities. Spending



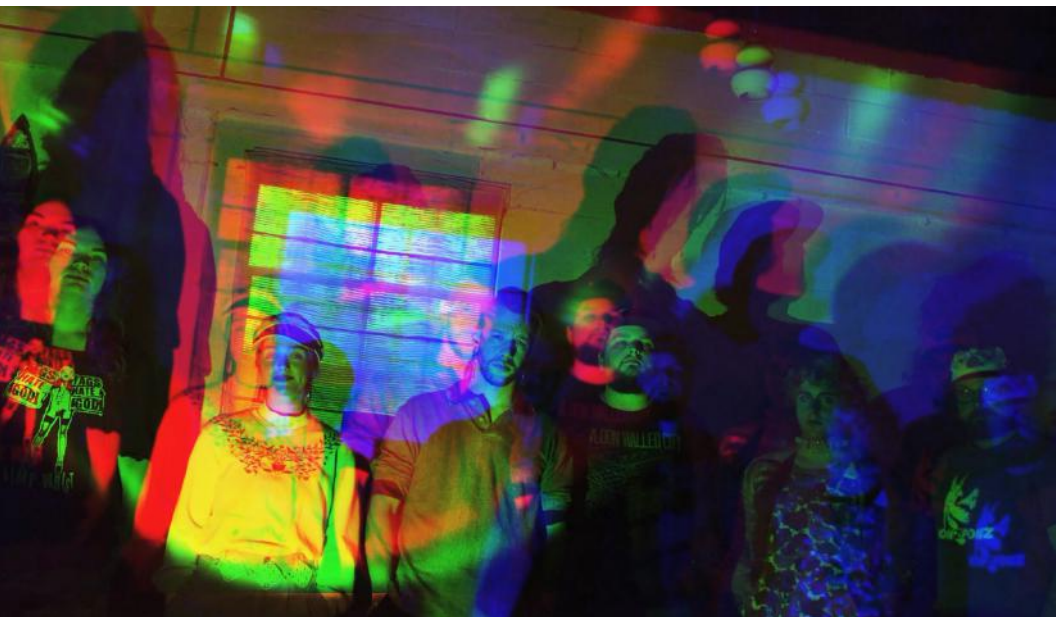
day in and day out working with the public allowed me to build my social skills and a sense of social confidence that I used to help join and lift the local independent music scene. Etcetera became the central hub from which extended the various spokes of my personal and professional life. This became true not only in a metaphorical but in a psychosocial way for myself and many other employees and customers who have passed through in the last 20 years. The passage of time has blurred as Etcetera has become a veritable Ship of Theseus, its culture slowly changing, building, and morphing as the individuals that work to keep it running have rotated over time.

At times, my long and emotionally intertwined history with Etcetera can feel suffocating, especially as the quarter-life crisis really hits. However, more often I think of how lucky I've been to have a role in Etcetera's larger story. Part of our specialty is bringing in young people who need a place to spread their wings and navigate the confusing, and ever-evolving, world of young adulthood with the built-in support of their peers. I'm proud to have been one of those kids. A decade later, I get to return the opportunity that was extended to me to the next generation. With any luck, in another 20 years the cycle will continue.

Long live Lower Town.

"Part of our specialty is bringing in young people who need a place to spread their wings."

As if I haven't already made this too much about me, here's a song from my band that sums up my love for Paducah's best neighborhood in less tedious terms:



*Let's take the left up here at Jefferson
See how close the party is to the alley tonight?
Church bells chime midnight at de Sales
I hold these crosswalks in my memory like projector slides*

*I'll take the long way home from the bar tonight
Count the sidewalk cracks and the bugs in the streetlights
Drink it all in without the pressure of time's flight
Divide these buildings into eras of my past lives*

*Faces pass by and peer through windowpanes
Looking for a bit of warmth and a chat in the morning light
How saccharine sweet are the rituals we abide?
I hold their smiles in my memory like projector slides*

*A cool opaque chill falls on the city streets tonight
I see my breath pour out underneath the fog lights
The river flows unceasingly to its western end
I have to follow to find somewhere else to empty in*



sugar

If you've never worked in a coffee shop, I don't think you can imagine how sticky things are back here pretty much all the time. This statistic only accounts for brown sugar, raw sugar, regular granulated white sugar, and the odd sugar packet, but add in the bubble tea syrups and jellies, coffee flavoring syrups and sauces, yogurt, melted ice cream...you get the idea.

It's a cursed inevitability that one day during your career here, you WILL drop the entire 9 lb. bucket of lychee jellies in the middle of a busy rush and cover yourself in so much goop that you have to go home and shower. If it hasn't happened to you, that just means it hasn't happened yet. The only thing you can do now is wait patiently, ideally in closed-toe shoes.



Bubble Tea with a Side of Word Hugs

-stacie parrish



In 2007, I was coming out of an exhausting relationship and looking for new hobbies to be involved in. I didn't know where to begin, just that I needed to be around people again, to be part of something. That's how I found the Paducah Writers Group and how I found Friday nights at Etcetera.

I've never had trouble doing things by myself, and that first Friday was no different. I sat down, ordered my hot chocolate with chocolate drizzle, and listened to the artists recite their poems, share their stories, and play their music. It was magical. Within a few weeks, Etcetera stopped being just the place we met and became the place I went to be part of something. Someone who read her own words out loud, who made friends over drinks and stories, and who felt connected to people on a deeper level.

I have so many memories from my time with the writers group, but two in particular stand out. The first was when our group partnered with local artists. Each of us was paired with someone who would create a piece inspired by one of our poems. I remember watching Char Downs turn my own words into something magnificent - colors, shapes, and words pulled straight from my poem. It's a humbling thing to see someone else understand your writing well enough to translate it into an entirely different language.

It made the words feel less like mine alone and more like something that belonged to anyone who viewed it. We then displayed our poems and correlating artwork in an exhibit at Etcetera.



The second was the LowerTown Arts & Music Festival. Our group was asked to choose a few writers to read their poems, and I was one of them.

I remember standing on that stage, nervous, aware that this wasn't just my writers group anymore. There were strangers, neighbors, and people who had wandered over from the festival. I read two poems and came down from the stage, heart pounding the way it does when you've just handed something private to a room full of people you don't know. A woman came up to me and said one of my poems, the one about domestic abuse and violence, had really touched her. That's the moment I think about when I reminisce on how much writing and words truly matter. Not because it made me a writer, but because for a few seconds it made me feel understood, and connected me to another human being on a level deeper than I ever imagined.

I was only part of the Paducah Writers Group for a few years, but I made friendships that will last a lifetime. Etcetera is where I learned to read my own words out loud without apologizing for them. Happy 20th anniversary, and thank you for giving a space like that to people like me.



shellacking of Mayfield

Paducah funds homeless fights

"Etcetera has been my favorite coffee shop since 2014-2015, one of those. I've been alone, with many friends, and my late boyfriend Tanner; I have plenty of memories and still love to pop in. Best chai in Paducah."

-Emily Darnell, Customer



A SMALL NOTE ABOUT THE ESPRESSO MACHINE...

① THE PART FINALLY ARRIVED.

② **I FIXED IT!!!**

AS PER NOTE BELOW... 30 REGULAR SHOTS RUN, ALL SIX SECONDS. 50 LONG SHOTS RUN, ALL ELEVEN SECONDS

Now if you'll excuse me, I'ma going to bed now. If by some magic it still doesn't work, please just come over and smother me with one of my cats.

FUCK YEAH!

Now if you'll excuse me, I'ma going to bed now. If by some magic it still doesn't work, please just come over and smother me with one of my cats.

♥♥♥ Jean

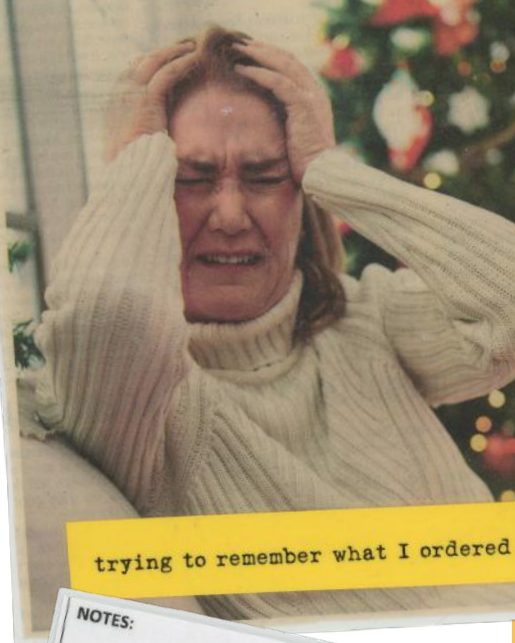
- CARAMEL.
- WHITE CHOCOLATE.
- HAZELNUT.
- VANILLA.
- CHOCOLATE.
- SPICY CHOCOLATE.
- COCONUT.
- PRALINE.
- CINNAMON.
- MARSHMALLOW.
- BANANA.
- IRISH CREAM.
- FROSTED MINT.
- PUMPKIN PIE.
- GINGERBREAD.
- ALMOND.
- MACADAMIA NUT.
- RASPBERRY.
- BLACKBERRY.
- BLUEBERRY PIE.
- ~~sugar-free~~ VANILLA.
- ~~sugar-free~~ HAZELNUT.
- ~~sugar-free~~ CARAMEL.



Artist: Elizabeth White

almost empty white sauce bottle makes fart noises

~~4th graders:~~ etc customers:



trying to remember what I ordered





coffee

We talk about our beans and suppliers all the time, but what about the machines that we put them in? Etc. hasn't had a coffee equipment repair person since at least 2010. Now, all the maintenance, calibration, and general fixing has fallen on Levi's shoulders, but back in the day it was me (with a lot of help from Allan) learning seat-of-the pants style. We've risked amputation by holding an airport down on the counter and cutting it in half with a hacksaw, for reasons I now no longer remember. I've driven to Nashville at 9 PM on the eve of Thanksgiving to pick up a new flowmeter cap from the house of a very accommodating local coffee tech. I've shocked myself in the face by forgetting to unplug the 220V cord powering an espresso machine, leading me to ban myself from all future electrical work. That's why, when the circuit board in the old Etc. Squared machine went haywire, I asked Toney to help me replace it since he knew a lot about building computers. We cast the old one in resin, one thing led to another, we got married, and ten years later I'm sitting here looking at it while he's asleep in the next room. What I'm trying to say is-- well, it's funny how life works out sometimes.



a tribute to the coffee gods

-aaron curry

Coming from the corporate world of coffee, all I had ever known was to be as efficient as possible while working at my quickest pace. Besides that, nothing else really mattered from the corporation's point of view. Despite the amount of work I put in and the dedication I gave to Dunkin, I was never valued as a worker, much less as a person. To escape my regular day-to-day, I started spending most of my afternoons at Etcetera Coffeehouse. Over time, this almost daily ritual had become a safe space for me. During these afternoons, I would take time to myself to journal and read, and it easily became my favorite place to go.

One day, when ordering my usual, I was asked by one of the baristas if I wanted to apply. It took me back a little at first. I was conflicted, feeling both excited and uneasy by the offer. While I didn't need a second job, I decided to fill out the application anyway. From the application alone, I was already given a sense of what Etcetera Coffeehouse would be like.

And to this day, I still stand by my response to one of the application questions: whether I would rather cry mayonnaise or sweat Kool-Aid... The only correct answer is to sweat Kool-Aid.

**"The only
correct
answer is
to sweat
Kool-Aid."**

After hearing that the job was open to me if I wanted it, I was unsure of what to do. I hadn't been actively looking for a job, and the thought terrified me.

Etcetera had become my safe space, and I was scared of losing the place that felt just like mine, away from the rest of the world. Over the next few days, I contemplated my next decision. It felt like my life could go either way, and I was conflicted about how to move. So, I convinced myself that the answer would naturally come to me. Quite literally the next day, I was working an afternoon shift at Dunkin and a customer came in the lobby wearing an Etcetera hoodie. I had never seen Etcetera merch out in

public before, and in that moment, I knew where my future was at. As a 19-year-old, the world seems as if it's at your fingertips, and that anything is possible. But that belief only goes as far as you let it. So, I took the risk and started working at Etcetera Coffeehouse. Now that I'm almost 23, it is safe to say that it was the best decision I've ever made.

"I knew
Etcetera
Coffeehouse
would be
the place
for me."

As one can imagine, the jump from the corporate world to the local world was mind-bending. At first, I was utterly terrified. It felt as though I was walking into a family reunion, and I was the long-lost, twice-removed cousin. In my first few weeks of training, I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. It felt like what I was seeing was just a farce, and my mind couldn't comprehend the ease behind the place. But I stuck with it, as the atmosphere kept proving my doubts to be just what they were: doubts. Being the newbie, I was quiet, anxious, and I rarely talked. After some time, I realized that each barista, in their own way, was super weird, but the weirdness was always encouraged. It was with this realization that I knew

Etcetera Coffeehouse would be the place for me.

One aspect about the job that I didn't expect was how social it was. As a former drive-through barista, interactions lasted no longer than thirty seconds, with the drink being the priority.





goddamn

Meanwhile, Etcetera has never been like that. Considering how most customers have been regulars for years, some even a decade or more, I'd say the drink and the customer are both the priority. As a matter of fact, sometimes the conversation is so good, the drink is forgotten about. One thing I've learned is that here at Etcetera, customers become your friends, and of course, I'm going to get lost in conversation with friends.

Over the years, unintentionally, Etcetera Coffeehouse has become a huge pillar in my life. It is here that I have met many people and friends that I hold close to my heart. Here, I have learned what community actually means. At the beginning, I thought it would just be a job, but somehow, along the way, it turned into a family.

Looking back, without having Etcetera, I am unsure of where I would be. In all seriousness, I think I'd be less myself. Having stood for 20 years, Etcetera Coffeehouse has become a staple in the community, my own personal experience just being a small fraction of its time. As many people would likely agree, I will be forever grateful to have experienced the powers of a Spanish latte. Happy Birthday, Etcetera; we love you!

" I will be
forever
grateful to
experience the
powers of a
Spanish Latte."



Of the jobs you've had, which one was your favorite? Why?: Parcels because it was my only job, but I did enjoy putting mayo on things





spanish sauce

Sweetened condensed milk is what turns a latte into a Spanish Latte.

The real reason it got the name is a mystery, because I shamelessly stole the recipe from a former workplace. (I get it, terrible optics, but the place has been closed for fifteen years and was hundreds of miles away in the first place!) The best I can come up with is that the name is a nod to Tres Leches cake. We haven't seen a can like this in well over a decade, though. You guys drink so many of them that we started getting it in big 10 lb. bags that are a really next-level nightmare when one bursts in transit and slowly leaks out of the box all over the stock room.

notes on my departure

-jean rhodes

After 16 long but incredibly fulfilling years at Etcetera, I started a new career in EMS at the beginning of 2023. I still run into old regulars frequently and they're always asking, "So what are you doing now?" These are some of my answers.

Why go from a coffee shop to EMS? I say it's mostly because my favorite thing is helping to manage any crisis that's not mine, where I can put my own problems in a box and focus on anything else. It was also a job where I could get the entry-level EMT certification in a single semester of night classes. I could jump off the cliff and land in this new line of work before I even had time to process it and change my mind. But as it turned out I kind of loved it, and did two extra years of intensive classes and training to get my Paramedic certification.

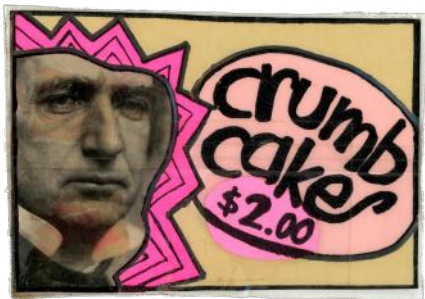
This significantly expanded my scope of practice, and now my dad can joke to all his friends that I'm legally allowed to pronounce him dead.

Which, now that I think about it, may also help explain my affinity for this line of work.

As the child of a journalist/English teacher, I went the first 36 years of my life without saying "y'all." I say it all

day at work now. But what can I do? People trust people who sound like them, and I need them to trust me so I can do my job. All men are "buddy" and all women are "sweetie," more things I wouldn't have been caught dead saying in my old life. I never saw the act of using pet names as a subtle power move, but it's true that they're only used top-down in the social pecking order. It's part of the unlearning of customer service, where the other person is always right and always in control. Patients don't want to be in charge anymore-- that's why they called 911 in the first place, right? Recently I told someone, "I have some good news! We're here now, so all you have to do is lie there and be dizzy." It seemed to help.

"..all you
have to do is
lie there and
be dizzy.."



I sometimes say that this job is less stressful than the old one simply because the complaints people have and problems you can solve seem a bit more realistic on the ambulance. Even if you know that a person's symptoms don't really indicate a true medical "emergency," more times than not they believe they are having an emergency, and you can validate that -- or not -- as you wish. For me at least, it was always more emotionally difficult to soothe a person showing that same level of stress over the wrong milk being used in their chai latte, and often impossible to do with the sincerity they expected. It's not all that exciting, most days.

Our calls involve patients who need stabilization on the way to specialized care at hospitals in bigger cities, little old ladies who fell on the way to bed and aren't hurt but can't get up on their own, fender-benders, or people with the flu and no transportation. Once a lady called because she saw a big spider. Which is not to say there isn't a fair amount of exactly the chaos people expect, but those are the stories I try not to bring home. I'm happy to talk about buying cupcakes for a patient's birthday while taking him to a dialysis appointment, but people who didn't sign up for this job shouldn't have to hear about the arm injury so bad you can't tell which elbow is the real one, or the times you tell a family member, "We need to get going, we'll

take good care of him," when you have no idea if he's still going to be alive by the time you get him to the hospital. That's when you realize that the short-term responsibility inherent to EMS is a true blessing. You're taking the patient to a building full of people far smarter and more educated than you are, and if you and the random volunteer firefighter you kidnapped for extra hands can handle the next ten minutes, anything that happens next won't be your fault. By the time CPR is discontinued and family is invited back from the waiting room, you're in the ambulance on the way to the next call, eating an Uncrustable from the EMS snack closet and making sure there isn't any blood in your hair. Make some inappropriate jokes, move on, process later, but more than anything feel grateful that you rarely have to watch a loved one get the worst possible news.



Ambulance crews are made up of two partners who spend 12 long hours in very close proximity. How well you get along with your partner can make or break your shift, but I have to say I've gotten really lucky.

My first and longest partnership was with an ex-motorcycle mechanic from Wingo who seemed to subsist mostly on Sundrop and winter-green-flavored dip. Getting to pet a golden retriever while at a patient's house was the heart-melting highlight of his week; he had some of his own, named after various firearms.

Now I usually work with a former minor league hockey player and dad of five. He loves meteorology and telling stories about how much he loves his wife. Sometimes it's a guy I call Cinnamon Roll, because he's kind of round and very sweet. He's obsessed with Bigfoot and tells stories about his tragic childhood with the level of emotion most reserve for reading off a take-out menu. He recently found out he didn't have prostate cancer and we were all so, so relieved.

The culture shock has been difficult, to say the least. But even more disconcerting than the unfamiliar socio-political landscape I now operate in is the weirdly intimate view I get into how other people live. It's not even the bizarre circumstances of others' lives and home situations. It's how mundane these things have become to them, and by extension, me.

Crazy things seem normal, normal things seem crazy. At one point I would have spent significant time wondering why exactly there was a giant pot of instant mashed potatoes sitting on the floor of that motel room. Now, it barely registers. I've sincerely thanked someone for *not* being covered in pee. The other day I opened the front door of a house to the loudest bloodcurdling screams I've ever heard in my life, only to find a lady with a swollen foot sitting quietly beside a cage containing a giant parrot named Cookie who appeared to be imitating a whole room of horror-movie extras. Later at the hospital I asked her, "I heard parrots can live for 80 years, how old is yours?" She sighed and looked into the distance. "*Fourteen*," she said.





how sweet it is now
 thighs burn from a hot seatbelt
 the sun catches the curls at the nape of her neck
 making her glow as she breathes out.
 the smoke leaves her lips reluctantly
 as she laughs, her eyes low in the clouds.
 i used to come here to cry.
 how sweet it is now,
 to grace it with her instead.



—12/20, etcetera parking lot, 12:21 am

Zyla Dortch
 (they/them)



LUKE GYLLENHALL FOUND AN ANSWER



320 N 6TH ST



milk & its alternatives

90.3% regular milk and half n' half, 5.2% oat milk, 3.3% soy milk, 1.2% almond milk. (Remember that era?) I don't know any personally, but online sources say that a cow produces an average of seven gallons of milk per day. I can say with confidence that Etc. has been solidly outpacing a cow in the dairy supply and demand equation for some time now. This is also a good time to say thank you to the fantastic group of invisible early-morning heroes that Prairie Farms has sent to fill the fridges over the years. Brad, I'll forever treasure that purple milk crate you finally tracked down for me, and thanks for not ratting me out for stealing the rest of the rainbow of milk crate colors whenever I saw one.





Door at Etcetera Coffeehouse
Paducah, Kentucky

#USK

May
Russ 2022



There are 8 of us. 8 moms. With 16 kids total. Some of us have known each other since childhood, but most of us have met more recently. No matter where we met, Etcetera is what connects us.

Each Saturday there is a group chat that starts pinging our phones around 7:30 am. "Anyone going to the coffee shop?" As it gets past 8 am: "Anyone know what the quiche is?" And then someone is going to send a photo of the quiche menu board. (Not that it matters, because we are all going to get it even if it isn't our favorite. And... while we are on that topic, our favorite is something that Jean used to make, the way that only Jean could.)

Most of us, and a random assortment of the children, will show up and sit for hours. We will laugh and chat. We will pet whatever cats or dogs are out back. We will catch up with all the weekend regulars and make sure to give the table of guys out front a little bit of a hard time.

These painted tables and wooden chairs are where we have been sitting when someone has broken the news about being pregnant, the latest frustration, or about that new job opportunity. Surrounded by these white walls covered in colorful local artwork is where we learned about the divorce, the latest news about parents, grandparents, and siblings, and got the update about that health concern.

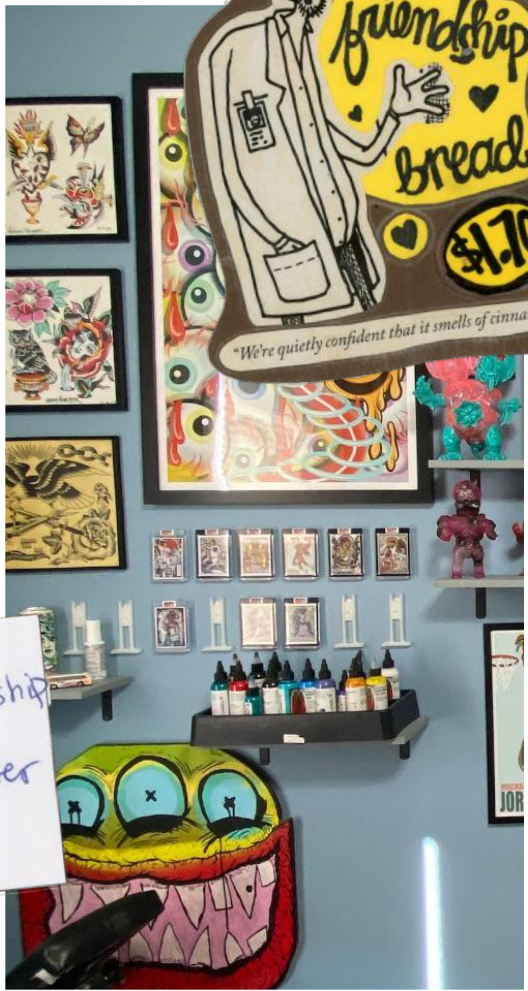
Our children have gone from drinking chocolate milk, to bubble tea, to matcha, to lattes. They've done schoolwork, worn costumes, helped Allan in the garage, swept leaves in the back, met friends, gone on first dates, and taken prom photos here.

This is the place we go when we need to get out. When there's snow or ice and everywhere else is closed. This is where we meet for a bit before work or after work or for a long lunch. We know the baristas by name and they know ours. They know what we order and we know which barista's song list is currently playing.

This group of mothers wouldn't be who we are without Etcetera. This place will be the backdrop of the memories of our friendship forever. Thank you for the friendship bread, the caffeine, and the safe place to share our lives with one another.

We'll see you on Sunday!

-alissa cooper



NOTES:



the friendship bread starter



Black Jackalope Studio

Black Jackalope Studio was founded in summer of 2023, and has since expanded from one artist in a small building in midtown to a bustling studio of five! The studio moved above Etcetera Coffeehouse on 6th Street in June of 2025, and now houses three tattoo artists and one permanent makeup artist/esthetician, and our amazing studio assistant!

The space was created with both clients and artists in mind, each person gets their own unique corner of the space with their own unique flair, which perfectly reflects the wide variety of styles and personalities that occupy Black Jackalope. The studio operates with everyone as part of a collective, where artistic integrity and long term quality outweighs studio profits.

When the art is permanent and the hours are long, you want it to be the best it can be! Each person participates in studio decisions, gets the opportunity to set and work on their own schedule, choose what style of work suits them, and largely make the time they spend at Black Jackalope their own.

We are very lucky to have such a unique assortment of talented individuals, and work hard to foster an ever growing and positive creative environment! Being able to work and thrive in Lowertown as a part of our shared space on 6th Street is such a brilliant opportunity as a group of creatives, and we are all very excited for what the future brings.



straws

Traditional bubble tea shops don't use lids but instead individually cap each drink with plastic film using a futuristic heat-sealing machine. For everyone who has wondered, that's why the bubble tea straws are pointy on one end. I looked into getting a machine multiple times, but a) they cost a staggering amount of money, and b) there have been very few Etc. employees over the years who I would have trusted with the ability to industrially heat-seal whatever they wanted. I love and respect them all, but can you imagine? It would have been mayhem. Regular lids weren't going anywhere on my watch.

Treats and libations
by adroit and kindly hands:
Our Etcetera

-Dustin Cox, Baker



bean in the machine

-aaron curry

The barista offered a choice between two different pills, one red and one blue. Arnold was unsure of what to do. He asked for a Spanish latte, but the barista hadn't said anything. Once again, Arnold requested a drink, dismissing what was in front of him. Remaining silent, with both eyes locked on Arnold, the barista raised her palms one after the other, yet again, showcasing each pill as if there was a decision to be made.

Now even more confused, seconds started to feel like minutes, and a line formed behind Arnold. Beads of sweat dripped down the side of his face. As he reached forward, his palms began to shake. At this moment, Arnold felt the energy shift in the room. He had no idea what was happening, and it felt as if his body was moving for him, almost robotic-like.

Arnold blinked, and he was no longer in line. He then looked down, and in the palm of his hand sat the red pill. It was almost as if seconds had been erased from his mind. As he struggled to remember the past few moments, everything around him became even more disorientating. The chatter in the coffee shop became indistinct, as conversations blurred together.

The walls were even starting to become pixelated. It was at this moment that Arnold convinced himself that if he took the red pill, he would stop feeling so weird. Arnold didn't waste a second before swallowing the pill. All the noise around him became muffled. Arnold lost sensation, first in his toes, then rapidly throughout his body. Soon after, his vision went black.

"they call
themselves the
'SproBros' "

When Arnold awoke, his head was pounding. His mind was racing as he tried to piece his thoughts together, and he desperately needed answers. As time went on, he started to wonder where he was. His vision was still pitch black, but he could tell there was a blindfold covering his eyes. His arms were tied against a metal chair, almost freezing to the touch. He couldn't quite remember the past 24 hours aside from the image of the red pill in his hands. And it would only be a matter of time before he began to panic.

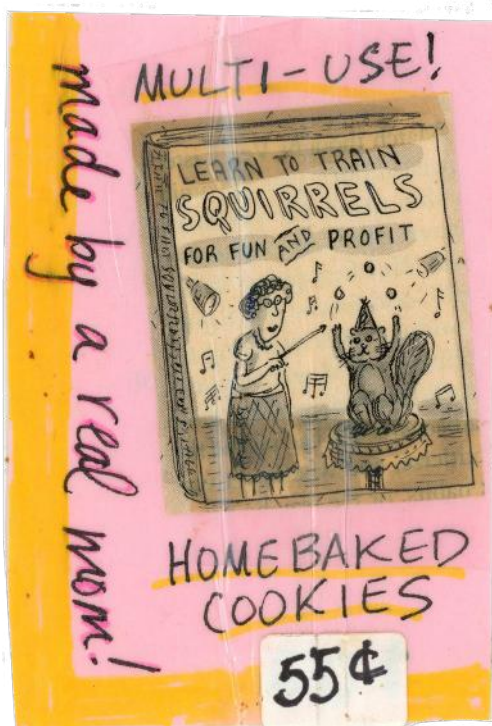
Despite not being able to see, Arnold sensed he wasn't alone. He began to plead with the darkness in the room, hoping that the figure would eventually reveal itself. As the thought of no escape crossed his mind, a voice made him shake.

"You're probably wondering who I am. But that is not important. The year is 2051, and you're here because of the pill you've taken. You see, the red pill was designed specifically to show you the truth about your reality. Everything that you've come to know has all been a lie. We've been tracking you for years. You are our last hope in securing the future of Etcetera."

For the next few minutes, silence hung in the air. Arnold didn't know how to respond. Everything the man said seemed unreal, as if it was a joke taken too far or a birthday surprise gone wrong. But, in no way was this how he intended to spend his 23rd birthday. Before he was able to respond, the man spoke again.

"I'm sure it won't make sense, as you have been brainwashed your whole life in your current reality. We've gone forward in time so that I can show you the truth about what your future really looks like. The fact of the matter is, Etcetera is at risk of being destroyed. Coffeeshops all across the globe are being eradicated, falling one after another. There's a group of people at work; they call themselves the "SproBros." Over the past few

decades, they've been dismantling the coffee world as we know it. We've done as much as we can, but only you can help us."



Yet again, Arnold didn't know what to believe. He was still stunned at how any of this could be happening. It didn't make any sense to him. Especially why he could be the only one to save the future. Regardless, something about this guy seemed suspicious, but since Arnold was still in pure shock, he lost any will to question the situation. After collecting his thoughts, Arnold asked: "What do you need me to do?"

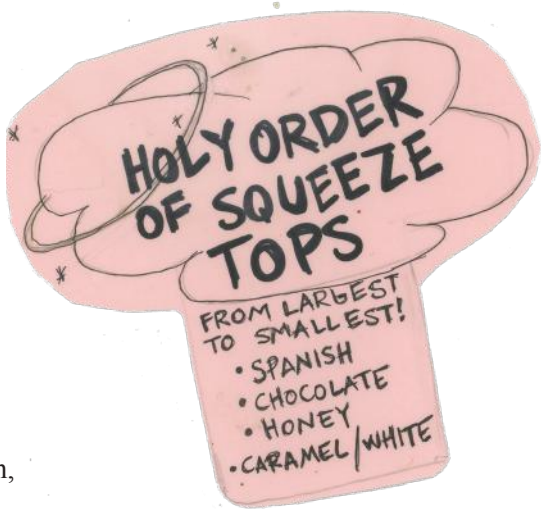
“It’s fairly simple. Once I take off your blindfold, all you will need to do is press the big red button in front of you. I would do it myself, but I’m unable to since I’m from the future. Listen to me, Arnold, if you really want to save Etcetera, all you have to do is press the button. Your life and so many others are on the line. So what will you choose?”

Arnold felt tremendous pressure. He wondered how he could ever live without Etcetera Coffeehouse. In this moment, he retraced his memories throughout the years. All the early mornings were spent with a warm cup, and afternoons filled with friendly conversations. He had found himself in this place, and over time, it had become a part of him. It would only make sense for him to do whatever he could to try and save it. The decision would be easy. Without any more hesitation, he pressed the button.

What Arnold hadn’t realized was the difference between the original two pills. He had chosen the red pill despite feeling no control over his decision. But he never questioned what the blue one meant. So, he decided to ask the dark figure what his other option would’ve been.

“Without any more hesitation, he pressed the buttons”

“Well, you see, the blue pill would’ve taken you to a different timeline; a timeline that I have been terminated from. In that realm, Etcetera had never been destroyed, and I died trying to do so. The red pill was our last chance to accomplish our mission, and you’ve helped us greatly. That button sealed Etcetera’s fate and your own.”



The look on Arnold’s face resembled pure despair. There were no other words left to say. In this moment, he felt the gravity of the situation and the hand he was dealt. What hurt him the most wasn’t the betrayal in the room; it was the guilt in the decision he made, one he believed to be innocent. Now, thanks to him, Etcetera would soon cease to exist. Whatever hope Arnold had left for himself vanished.

"Tell me the difference between a Spanish latte and a Cubano"

"I see you are upset with how you chose. Sure, it is a heavy burden you must bear now, as Etcetera's demise will occur in less than a minute. But you made this choice, Arnold, and you must accept it. However, since I'm a nice guy, there is another way you can save yourself and Etcetera.

"Tell me the difference between a Spanish latte and a Cubano."



FREAK
BOOT

Hot Tub THURSDAY



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the spanish fly

-Joshua "Levi" McDuffee

Part 1

Victor Crenshaw was a pensive man, if yet a bit precarious. Indeterminate in age except for the gray burgeoning in his sideburns. Maybe a bit too thin but not frail. His finger slid over the sleeve of his coffee cup while his eyes slid down the shoulder of the woman sitting across from him and onto the table. On it was painted a copy of Georgia O'Keeffe's Red Canna.

"Vic, what'd you say that latte you got was called again? Something Cuban? Vic?" His eyes flickered up from the table. "Did you know they used to call these condoms?" he said tapping the stained cardboard wrapped around his paper cup. "Who do you suppose thinks up this stuff? Condoms? Is that because it's protecting me from the coffee or the coffee from my grip?" "Why do you do this?" The woman interrupted, swaying to the side and brushing her hair over her shoulder. Her vibrant red curls almost matched the table. "You invite me out, I drive an hour out of the city to get here, and you don't even listen to me. You just stare out the window or at the table and muse." With her last word she elongated herself and shrugged her shoulders.

Victor stared back down at the table and then to the floor. His hand again began absently fingering the sleeve. This was why he liked Leanora. She was fiery, like her hair, like the table. You never guessed what was on her mind because it was quickly in your face if you weren't careful. "I guess," he started and then took a sip from the drink he was holding. Something, not so liquid collided with the back of his throat and for a moment he thought he felt tiny legs scurry across his tongue.

Local sheriff's office aims to

Eat dozens in
the community

Victor shot up from the bed gasping and choking, only no coffee spewed from his mouth and the woman and the table were gone. Both of his hands were clasp tightly across his mouth and he had to actively relax them. "To keep something out or something in?" he wondered. He stared at his open palms perplexed and surprised by their autonomy. He pulled on the string of the lamp next to his bed to get a better look. And there they were, his hands. Soft, unworked, maybe a bit clammy. He rubbed his eyes and half murmured to himself, "What was the name of that latte I used to get?"

Part 2

The lightbulbs seemed to sway each time the front door to the café closed. They were hung in a row, delicately with wire. They reminded him of a newton's cradle. What exactly something like that did or was for, he was unsure, but he was fond of things like that. Objects with no real utility or use, not even beauty really. Just a thingamajig you buy in museum gift shops or trinket stores that line the tourist districts of major world cities. Each time the door closed and the lights swayed, Victor Crenshaw sort of swayed with them.

"The Spanish latte, was that it?" The man in front of him half turned and half pointed at the letter board menu. It wasn't as if there was a need to point. The board was stark white with bold black letter tiles and there were only a few menu items. Cortado, Latte, Cold Brew. Vic had always found it funny that coffee never could stick to one language, or origin for that matter. "Yeah, yeah. The Spanish latte. Lenore kept asking me about it in my dream." With the mention of her name a prickly feeling skittered across the back of his throat. He shuddered and coughed quickly to hide his disgust.

"You always have dreams like that? I mean I've known you what? thirty odd years and I ain't never heard you say you had no dreams like that. Whadda they call em? Night terrors?" Vic and Travis Sopretto had met in grade

school and had grown up together on Staten Island. Vic had left the island, "Travy" as they called him, not so much.

"I'm not sure I'd call it a night terror. I mean I didn't wake up screaming or nothing. But I could taste..." His tongue tied at the thought and he twinged at a sudden onset of tinnitus in both ears. Slowly the ringing calmed to a mild buzz.

"It was just some stupid nightmare. I must have seen another one of her billboards or something. And that's what triggered it."

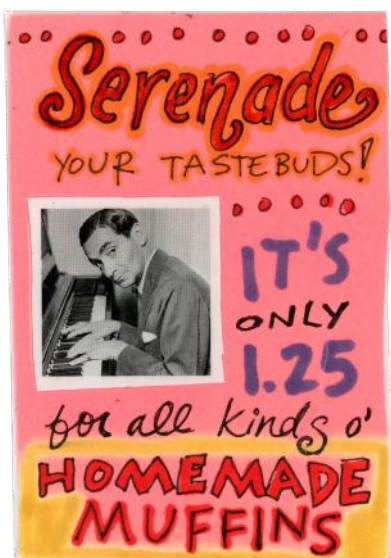
"Yeah, how about that huh? Leading lady on Broadway. Big shot! You really fucked that one up, eh?! I mean, geez. I ain't never seen a gal..."

"Yeah we get it!" Vic cut him off before it got ugly. "Y'know Travy, you really know how to hold a guy up. Just when he thinks he's down and all the cards are played, he's got you to stand there with him!" The front door slammed again and the lights seemed to slam with it. The tinnitus that had never fully gone away rose to a growl in Vic's ear.

"Ey man, you know I don't mean nothing by it. I just call it like I see it and I could see her everyday uh the week." With that Travis shoved an elbow a little too hard into Vic's ribs. The steam wand on the espresso machine began to hiss and the whine grew louder. "I'm just sayin', of all the ones you let get away, she might have

been the spiciest! You ever, ya know..." The grinder burrs seemed to whirl with an indefinite end. The milk fridge below the counter knocked the counter on the open swing and with equal force against itself as it was opened and closed, opened and closed. With each cycle the newton's cradle above Vic's head seemed to rebound and sway. The cacophony inside of his head spiking and yawing as though his head were spinning about his shoulders. A lighthouse of sound pouring into his ears with each revolution. "Cmon Vic, she ever let ya..."

An amorphous drone sounded from Vic's mouth, like nothing he had ever heard before. A million tiny buzzers just slightly out of time with each other yet coalesced into one sound. "NO!" it screamed and as quickly as it came out of his mouth he was out of the café.



Part 3

"It really isn't like you to be early. On time, sure maybe, screaming in on two wheels with sparks coming out the back. But to beat me here? Something really must be going on." Victor Crenshaw sat at a table that seemed to have drained the blood from his face. A gaunt reflection stared at him from the gloss red paint between his hands. He sat hunched over the table, eyes down with a slight shiver.

His head perked at the voice. "Oh my goodness, I really can't believe it. I wasn't sure you'd come, after all this time. I'm fine really, like I said over the phone. It's really not a big deal. If I'm being honest, I think I just wanted to see you."

"Yeah, it's really good to see you too. I was kind of caught off guard to see you call but I'm glad we could get together. You caught me at just the right moment. We've had to postpone for a little while. The theater we booked was infested. Can you believe that? I mean, it's Midtown so of course there's something creepy crawling around. But that word, infested. I can't begin to describe the size of some of things in the wings. I swear, I coulda burned the place down myself."

Vic's eyes darted to the floor again and back up at her. Leanora had rarely thought of herself as an intimidating

person. Of course, she had a big personality but never someone to be afraid of or cower away from. But in this moment, she felt what seemed like thousands of eyes bearing down on her. Each one waiting for her next movement, deciphering each gesture as neutral or threat. But as she stared into Vic's eyes, there were only two blue stolid puddles with her tiny reflection. She tried to soften her expression and slunk down into the chair across from Vic. "You sure you're doing alright?"

Leanora's hand reached across the table and grasped Victor's. They were cold, and a little damp. He tried to withdraw but she gently held on. His head tilted slightly with confusion.

"Y'know, I'm not. I haven't been, anyway. At the risk of just laying it all out there, I'm torn up. I see your face in everything, literally on signs all across town but even in small things. This table, it reminds me of a table that was in my dreams. We were sitting together, well, kind of like this. Even in my dreams you rejected me. And so now I can't sleep, I've barely been eating. I know this only makes it more pathetic, me pouring this all out to you like some kind of bad romcom but I don't know what else to do." Tears started to splash against the red gloss. The same red that matched Leanora's fingernails as they held onto his ceramic white skin.



"There's no one to tell, no one that cares. No one. Just, no one. I'm alone." His voice cracked and hung on the word alone. Victor picked his hands up and shoved his palms into his eyes and began to sob.

Deep heaving breathes out chopped with sharp higher pitched inhales. Victor began to cry with everything that he had left of him being poured out onto that bright red table. The Red Canna flashed in his mind, "Oh, Victor, I'm so sorry!"

Leanora's hand vibrated across his back and onto his opposite shoulder. She squeezed him tight and he could feel her head leaned against the side of his. Her warmth and her heart with each hum growing louder and stiflingly hot. And then he felt something drip onto his hand that didn't seem to be his own tears. He looked down to see a fly land, and then another. Victor quickly rose and turned to see a black whirring mass bear down on him. There was no escape. He closed his eyes and let the drone embrace him.

Victor Crenshaw lay in the middle of a sidewalk, legs akimbo, flies simmering about his open eyes and mouth, brain matter shot across the street in the shape of a lily.

since i was small

savannah hunt

in honor of and inspired by e.e. cummings

since i was small(since 2006)

my father and i split a

hot chai

whipped cream

the baristas were quiet guardians(quieter than smoke)

watching him step outside and back in

one woman wore her eyeshadow like weather

violet && gold

her hair a long blonde water i decided was a mermaid's

everything there was made of maybe: maybe the caffeine,maybe the slow
unnameable thing a child feels when a room is building itself around her into
something like belonging

i noticed(observant kids notice)

how morning made my parents

soften, so i woke before the softening and made it

happen:my father's coffee twoheapingtablespoonspersixounces

,my mother's twoleveltablespoonspereightounces

i learned early that love has measurements

when i was nine my father stopped (the world does this,you know,removes a
person the way a hand removes itself from yours,without asking)

my parents already apart,my mother and i moved thirty minutes

which is not far

except when far

means:a place too holy to enter without him

i could drive there for years and didn't

going without him felt like theft even knowing

knowing

he would've told me

go

gO

GO

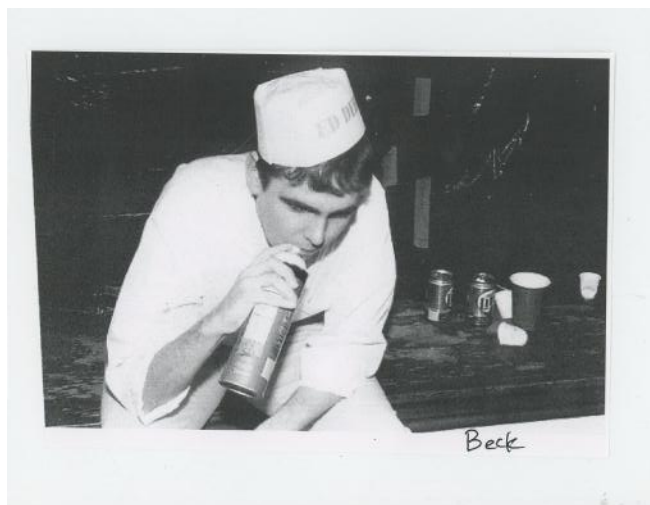
eighteen, i poured coffee in a chain and hated almost every pour of it
twenty-two, a friend tried to get me hired where the mermaid used to work
i did not believed earned a seat inside the magic
i felt(i always feel)
like someone standing just outside the circle

now i am twenty-six
four and
a half years
a barista in the place
that raised me sideways
whatisadegreewhatisanypaper

we watch your children get taller we hold your worst weeks we remember what
you drink without asking

and everything we do
we do it
right

my favorite coffeeshop
my sweet old et
cetera

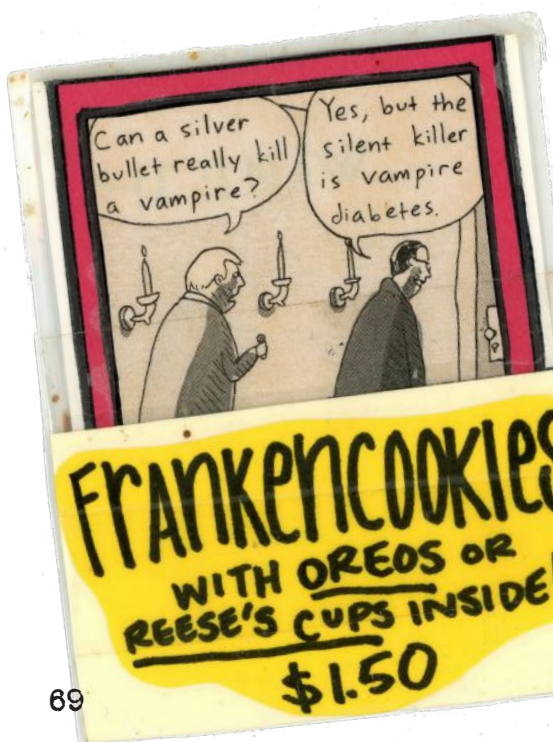


born on the river 1/30

levi mcduffee

Where I'm from
the Ohio River is easy to miss.
Commuters tracking back and forth
ants in line across the I-24 Bridge.
See the Ohio River is easy to miss.
Down at the riverfront
more cars than people,
empty ferries docked in a concrete marina.
Passengers leaving
four wheels for two feet
in hopes of discovering
something old in the newly restored
downtown.
Lights of restaurants and hotels
arthouses and empty convention centers
outshining the opaque blue Ohio.
There are kids skipping rocks.
All ages. All sizes. All colors.
All lower middle class.
Skipping the same rocks
that I used to as a child.
Skipping the same rocks
that I do when I reminisce.
See the Ohio River is easy to miss.

Tow boats meander on lazily
from left to right.
Like stumbling down the stairs
in the middle of the night
flashing their eyes
left to right
catching glimpses of homes they are missing
with their spotlight.
See the Ohio River is easy to miss.
Birds skim the water
and a lonely poet sits
wandering, "For so long how did
the Ohio River, I miss?"





in memory of king vinny



Artist: Sage Hoffman



Paws tucked for lap naps
with crimped ears and orange stripes
sleep sound Prince Vinny
-Emilee Clark, Co-Owner



“My love of cats is rivaled only
by my love of coffee. These photos
are a tribute to this awesome kitty
cat and Etcetera Coffeehouse.”
-Judy Crofton, Customer



from the etc kitchen

This section features three of our favorite recipes
selected from a July 2026 Etcetera staff poll:
Snickerdoodle Bars, Pecan Pie Muffins, and Jalapeño Cheddar Muffins.

Abbreviations and Tips

tsp.: teaspoon

Tb.: tablespoon

fl. oz.: US customary fluid ounce

c.: cup

#: avoirdupois pound

“: imperial inch

sub.: substitute

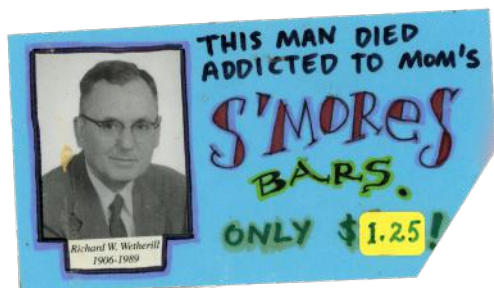
On Butter: Using unsalted butter allows a baker to better control salinity. Salted butter might be used if any added salt is reduced by some arbitrary amount. These recipes presume salted butter.

On Salt: Kosher salt presents as larger flakes which stack differently in a measurer than the smaller granules of common iodized salt. This affects salinity, so adjust accordingly.

On Mixing: Overmixing flour-heavy wet dough can easily overwork it. Some gluten structure is usually necessary, but too much can be untoothsome [sic]. “Careful, Icharus.”

On Baking: These recipes are presented with ‘default’ bake times/temps. Know your oven; each is a unique animal, so times/temps may need some situational alteration.

On Cooling: It is often worthwhile to rest baked goods for some (~5) minutes in their bakeware when immediately out of the oven to allow interiors to set; however, it is usually preferable to demold the goods before cooling fully.



Snickerdoodle Bars

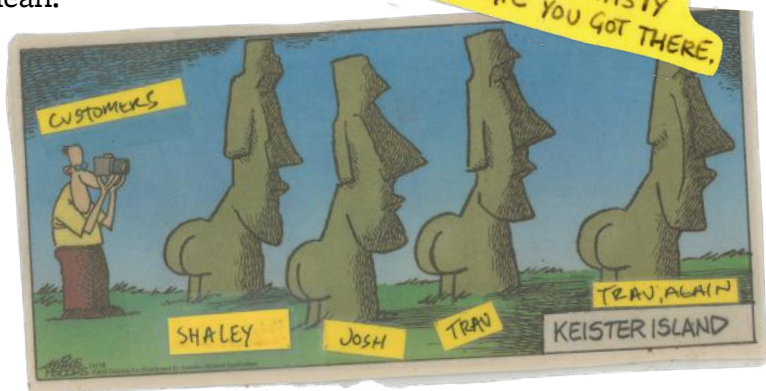
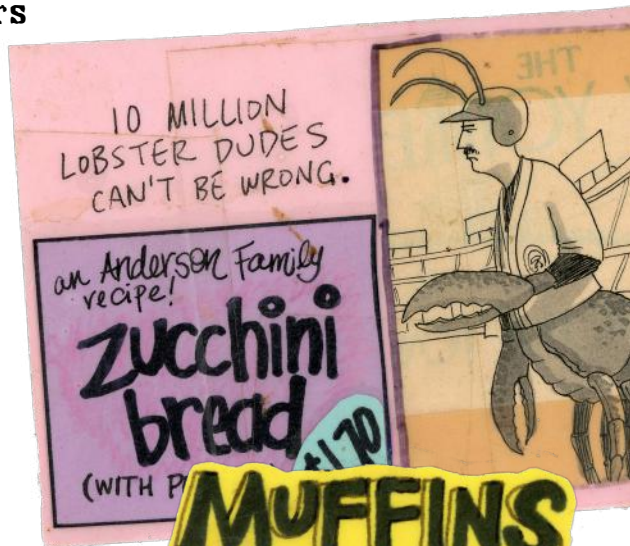
Yield: 10 bars

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. butter, melted
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. brown sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. cream of tartar
- cinnamon and sugar

Method of Preparation

- Preheat oven to 350°F.
- Grease a 7x11" metal baking pan.
- Stir together cooled butter, both sugars, and eggs.
- Sift together dry ingredients.
- Add dry ingredients to the wet.
- Do not overmix.
- Smooth into pan and cover with cinnamon sugar.
- Bake ~25 minutes or until tester comes out clean.



Pecan Pie Muffins

Yield: 6 muffins

Ingredients:

- 1 c. butter, melted
- 1½ c. brown sugar
- ~2 c. pecans, chopped/crushed
- ~½ tsp. kosher salt
- 4 eggs
- 1 c. all-purpose flour

Method of Preparation

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease both the muffin pan and muffin cup liners (if using).
- Beat eggs in a mixing bowl. Mix in sugar, pecans, salt, and melted butter.
- Fold in dry ingredients.
- Divide into 6 muffin cups. Bake 25-30 minutes or until done.



Jalapeno Cheddar Muffins

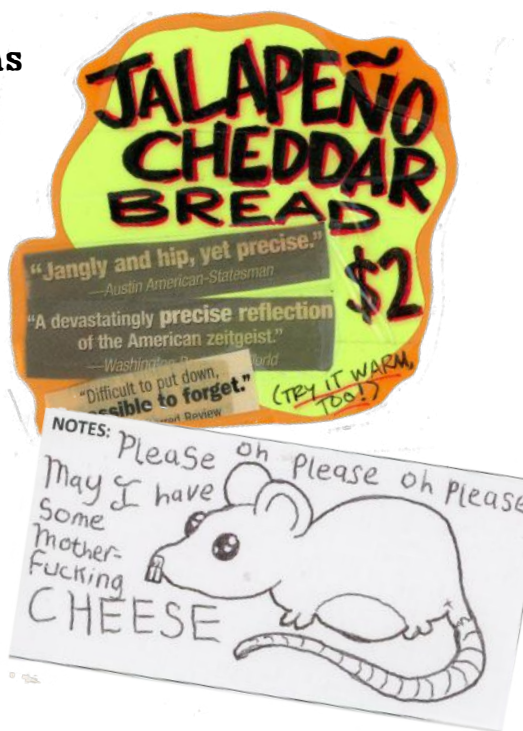
Yield: 12 muffins

Ingredients:

- 3½ c. all-purpose flour
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- 2 Tb. baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 5 fl. oz. neutral oil
- ½ c. butter, melted
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. magic spice
(sub: savoury herb/spice blend or 'kitchen pepper')
- 1 c. buttermilk
(sub: 1 c. whole milk + 1 tsp. lemon juice + 15 minutes)
- 3-4 medium to large jalapeños, diced
- 1 # shredded cheddar cheese

Method of Preparation

- Preheat oven to 365°F. Grease both the muffin pans and muffin cup liners (if using).
- Add flour, baking powder, and nutmeg to sifter.
- In a large bowl, mix egg, oil, melted butter, salt, pepper, garlic, magic spice, buttermilk, and jalapeños. Sift in dry goods and combine.
- Stir in cheese.
- Divide into 12 muffin cups. Bake 30 minutes or until done.





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