

<https://buffalonews.com/2019/12/29/my-view-barkeeps-must-know-when-to-say-when/>

## **My View: Barkeeps must know when to say when**

By [My View](#)

Published December 29, 2019

**By Marty Walters**

A nice lady called me a bad name last night.

It happens occasionally in my line of work. As a dosage regulator and dispenser of a legal drug, I am sometimes the recipient of bad cheer when I cut someone off.

Last night was an easy call. I witnessed the visibly intoxicated woman and her friend walk in, sit down at the bar and begin talking.

I presented a couple of glasses of water, gave my friendly greeting, eye contact with a smile, and asked the nice ladies if I could feed them something.

Yes, they said, and mentioned they were coming from a nearby tavern.

I dropped menus, and went to check on my other guests. This gave me a little time to devise a plan. New York State law forbids serving anyone who is visibly intoxicated, so I didn't have any options other than how to present the news.

Of course, they might not even order alcohol, but I had heard a reference to cosmopolitans from the lady I could not serve.

After checking the status of other customers, I circled back around. Addressing the intoxicated woman, I quietly mentioned that I was not comfortable serving her any alcohol. I suggested feeding her.

In my 40 years behind the bar, I have seen varied reactions to cutoffs. Sometimes people understand, and stay for something to eat.

Sometimes the reaction is scary: One guy smiled, reached out to shake my hand, which I (foolishly) offered, and then proceeded to grasp my hand in his iron grip until such time as he chose to let it go. Smiling all the while, he silently let me know he could crush not only my hand, but my puny bartending self.



Marty Walters

Another cutoff cost me my job. I told the tavern owner that I did not think a couple of people should be drinking shots. She told me to get down there and serve her customers. I handed her the keys to the establishment, and told her she needed to get down there and serve her customers. I quit on the spot.

Last night's reaction was unfortunate. The lady called me a naughty word, and then threatened to blast me on social media. She then posted an inaccurate review on Google that accused me of not serving her food because I wanted to go home. Lady, check your pants. They are on fire!

Seriously though, it's time that safe serving meets responsible drinking. That's the tag line for Green Yellow Red, my free NY State Liquor Authority-certified Alcohol Training Awareness Program (ATAP) that I created in 2013. Bartenders serve safely. Guests drink responsibly.

Perhaps I was destined to provide alcohol training. I learned about the dangers of over-serving firsthand. In my misspent youth as a Washington, D.C., bartender, I took a ride from a lady who I had over-served. After she rolled her car and I was ejected through the windshield, I had lain bleeding on the cold pavement in the rain-soaked predawn March morning. Uncomfortable!

The incident left me with a divot that manifests itself as a bald spot on the side of my head. When people ask about it, I tell them the truth: I was abducted by space aliens, and they took part of my brain for a cloning experiment to be used in a distant galaxy. The scary part is that far, far away, there is an off-kilter world where 4.3 billion people look like me. The good news is, nobody waits for a drink.

Please, folks, drink responsibly, and don't drive drunk.

*Marty Walters, of Derby, preaches safe serving and responsible drinking.*