

Nightlife review: LIV Lounge at Aksarben Village doesn't disappoint

By Greg Jewett / World-Herald correspondent Mar 1, 2018



The interior of LIV Lounge at Aksarben Village in Omaha.

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Many older folks remember when Aksarben (which, for anyone who doesn't know, is "Nebraska" spelled backward) was all about horse racing. In the mid-'80s, the market spoke, and it seemed that Snaksarbens ("Nebraskans" spelled backward) preferred the fast pace, high turnover and payouts of the greyhounds over horse racing. *C'est la guerre*.

Aksarben Village is still fast-paced and pays out better than ever as one of those spotlessly clean places where the public sphere of university living overlaps with commercial development. If you can conjure it up — from movies to pizza, cupcakes to Thai, clothes to spirits — you can get it in Aksarben Village.



One day, when a corporate arcology sits here, our grandchildren will remember when this was all just an early 21st-century mixed commercial-residential area where students, their parents and the community came to dispose of their disposable income. And when they do, LIV Lounge will rightly and prominently feature in those memories of green.

The parking for LIV (and everything in Aksarben) is endless, the hood is bustling, spotlessly clean, energetic and family-friendly. From the outside, LIV itself isn't terribly distinctive, but it does have a spacious patio that was wisely empty on the chilly night of my visit. That will warrant additional warm weather inspection.

The interior of LIV reminds me that you can do just about anything inside these wonderfully interchangeable, bric-a-brackish commercial developments. This space is all sorts of swanky. Black leather chairs and sofas line the walls and fill interesting little niches where friends and lovers can commingle and canoodle in semi-dark semi-privacy. The fireplace is a great touch in this intimately lit den. There are also TVs.

The level of friendly service here cannot be taught to or threatened into staff — it has to come from a place deep inside. Bartender Emma and server Brianne (apologies for any misspelling) deserved at least a 25 percent tip for making this a social experience worth repeating.

The LIV Lounge drinks menu reads like "The Silmarillion" of Omaha cocktails, and if you can get through this tome in one sitting, you probably scored higher on the SATs than I did.

I'm a beer guy who respects the cocktail and the bartender's recommendation. Emma recommended one of her current favorites, the Pink Pearl, a delicious concoction of vodka, grapefruit juice and grenadine. Brianne recommended a Cucumber Crush, and I jumped at it when she described it as an Orange Julius with cucumber. Everything was perfect.

Happy hours are 3 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, 7 p.m. to close Thursday and all day Sunday, with \$5 featured cocktails, house wine and tap beer. Trivia starts at 8 p.m. on Thursdays, and there is a DJ on Saturdays, from 10 p.m. to close.

Stop by and try it — you will not be disappointed.