



Visiting Chicago this weekending, and have much to report from my recent sojourn to “Iggys” on Dearborn. “Sublime Martinis” the sign outside proclaims, so I decide to imbibe in one to verify this claim. I enter and order. Out of the corner of my eye I see a blond curse. After watching the bartender for a while I finally asked him how many martinis he might make in a night. “Oh, I don’t know.” he said. “Tonight, maybe 40 or so. It’s slow... But, a couple of months ago, over on North Avenue (there are 3 locations for Iggys) I made 500 in one night!” he proudly proclaims.

“And,” I ask, “how many can you drink?”

“Oh 20!” he replies. I doubt this.

“I am from Mexico,” he offers by way of explanation to me and the guy sitting just a few seats down the bar from me. “We have a very high tolerance.”

He’s slight of build with dark hair, a sprinkle of facial hair and has a voice like a Speyside scotch, dry and light. His lilting accent almost sounds more Italian than Mexican — almost like Don Novello’s Father Guido Sarducci character.

A quartet of lava lamps dance lazily on the back bar to strains of Sinatra, which anachronistically alternates with house music on the sound system. The back wall is adorned with a large painting of Sinatra with Count Basie.

I am at seat 6 at the bar, Carlos is tending. A nervous woman, kind of a tightly wound seating savant, hovers near the door like a ninja stalker. This is the blond who I saw cursing earlier. She will spend her night hovering, stalking and cursing. She manages to scare away a young grunge couple who just wanted some pasta.

With each martini ordered Carlos patiently fills a pint glass with ice, then \hat{A} ½ way with spirits. He caps it with a metal shaker, shakes it vigorously but not to excess, then bringing it over the waiting glass, cracks it like an egg, letting the chilled liquid run out while holding back the ice. Any ice which sneaks past he artfully scoops out with the lip of the pint glass.

A pair of cute, young girls come in and whip out their ID cards. They order gin and tonics.

Later, when they ask for menus, Carlos explains the specials. "And there's one special which isn't on the menu," he says, winking at his brother, seated at the bar. "Order this," he says, pointing at the menu "and you get a free Martini, from Level Vodka." No one else was offered this special. The girls demure.