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DINING

Rocky's Bar opens in United Center, honoring late Blackhawks chairman with craft cocktails and mini hot dogs

By Ilana Arougheti
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Chicago Blackhawks fans hang out inside the new Rocky's Bar, which was unveiled in honor of the late Blackhawks Chairman Rocky Wirtz, near Section 119 at the United Center in Chicago, before a game on Dec. 19, 2023. (Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune)

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Rocky’s Bar opened on the 100 level of the United Center on Tuesday night, honoring a late Blackhawks chairman with craft cocktails and family photos.

The bar serves as a highly decorated tribute to team Chairman W. Rockwell “Rocky” Wirtz, who died in July at age 70. Wirtz stepped into the role after his father, Bill, died in 2007.

The late Blackhawks chairman brought his own folding chair to games, which he always parked in Section 119, Blackhawks public relations manager Anthony Filomena said. Rocky’s Bar is situated in the same section, on the site of a former Crown Royal Whisky Bar.

The United Center announced plans for the new bar in October. Revamping the space took three to four months, Filomena told the Tribune.

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Small circular tables fill the center of Rocky’s Bar, with cozy booths lining the wall beside the bar. Blackhawks memorabilia shares space with pictures of the Wirtz family.

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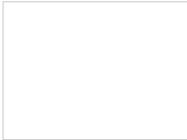
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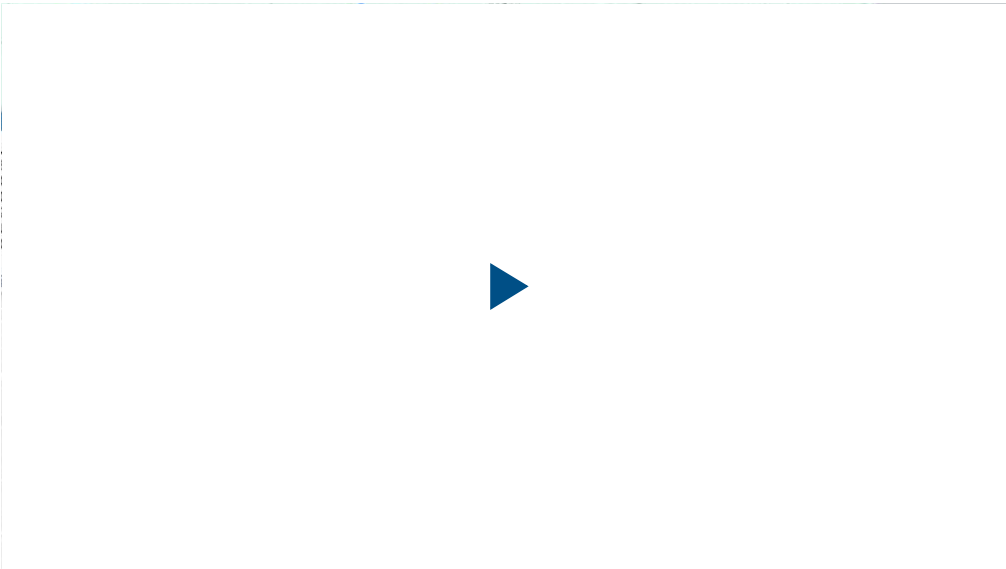


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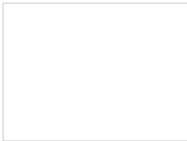


“There’s a lot of great milestone moments throughout Rocky’s life, both at the Blackhawks and outside,” Filomena said.



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Filomena expects the space will be best known for its cocktails, each \$17. The menu was built around Rocky’s favorites — margaritas, Old-Fashioneds with Scotch whisky and martinis with three olives. Patrons who want to drink like Rocky can order an extra-cold martini with blue-cheese olives, hold the vermouth.

Outside of the new Rocky’s Bar near section 119 at the United Center. (Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune)

Drinks are seen on a table inside the new Rocky’s Bar. (Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune)

Rocky’s will also offer several salt-forward bar bites not found anywhere else in the United Center. Mini hot dogs (\$12) are served wrapped with caramelized onions and sport peppers in puff pastry, and french fries come drenched in black truffle butter (\$12).

Filomena’s favorite bite is the house potato chips with crispy prosciutto, which have a “meaty, savory flavor.”

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Rocky’s also serves two beers created in collaboration with the Goose Island Beer Company, themed for the Blackhawks and the Bulls. Blackhawks Ale, an American pale ale, and Bull & Goose, a wheat ale — both \$12 a pour — will be available around the United Center all season.

Danny Wirtz, right, chairman of the Chicago Blackhawks, shows people around the new Rocky’s Bar, which was unveiled in honor of his father, the late Blackhawks Chairman Rocky Wirtz on Dec. 19, 2023. (Chris Sweda/Chicago Tribune)

The bar doubles as a tribute to Wirtz’s involvement in the beverage industry, Filomena said. The Wirtz family founded Breakthru Beverage Group, an alcohol wholesaler of more than 6,000 beers, wines and spirits.

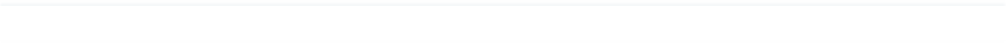
Rocky’s Bar is designed as a group hangout space, Filomena said. Though surrounded by other concessionaires, the bar is built to accommodate conversation.

“Rocky loved giving back to the community and bringing people together,” Filomena said. “Hopefully it feels like a lot of joy and happiness, fans coming to the United Center to make special memories with their friends and family, hanging out there between intermissions and before the game starts.”

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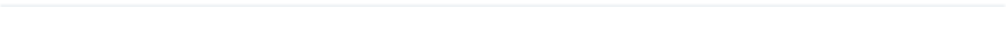


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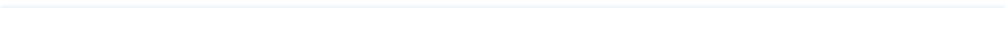


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