

LGBTQ-Friendly Bar Marks Grand Opening in Edwardsville

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
June 23 2023 1:51 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - A new LGBTQ-friendly bar is celebrating its grand opening in Edwardsville this weekend.

REINE, described by owner John Deppen as “a bar with a light tapas menu,” will host a drag show at 10 p.m. on Saturday, June 24, to commemorate their opening and Pride weekend.

“We’re more pushing on the environment, the cocktails, kind of a meet-and-greet kind of thing. It’s just a slower venue,” Deppen said of the bar. “Everyone wants to have a good time.”

REINE opened in May, but this weekend will mark the launch of their finalized menu and Pride weekend. Many Pride celebrations will take place across the region this weekend because it’s the anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall riots that are widely regarded as the beginning of LGBTQ+ Pride.

Deppen said he wouldn’t categorize REINE as a “gay bar,” but the clientele tends to be divided equally between LGBTQ+ community members and non-members during the weekends, with LGBTQ+ people as the primary customers. He noted that other LGBTQ-friendly bars are located throughout the region, but REINE is the first of its kind in Edwardsville.

“You can relax. No one’s staring,” Deppen explained. “It’s just a different environment when it’s predominantly a lot of gay people.”

He added that the location has private parking with one way in and one way out of the shopping complex, which contributes to the bar’s safety.

But of course, the main pull is the food and drinks. Street corn salsa, beef sliders, crab cakes and more are on the menu, along with a wide variety of “upper-scale” liquor, according to Deppen. Martinis and cocktails are the main attractions, but with two full bars and a disco ball, the night doesn’t have to stop there. You can also sip your drink out on the patio, which Deppen says is “probably the best patio in Edwardsville.”

REINE’s drag show grand opening event will include five performers. The cover charge is \$5, which will be donated to the [Trevor Project](#). Roxie M. Valentine, a well-known drag queen in the St. Louis area, will host the event. While it’s going to be a fun night, Valentine took a moment to recognize the anti-drag legislation that is spreading across states like Tennessee.

“Right now more than ever, we can’t back down and let the right scare us into the shadows,” Valentine said. “We as drag entertainers are some of the leaders of the revolution, and I see it as our job to be 100 percent visible right now. Drag queens are your coworkers, your neighbors, your friends and most of all just everyday people like you and me.”

She added that these bills are more about the rights of transgender people than drag performers. As Pride Month comes to an end, she urged people to show kindness and do what they can to support gender-nonconforming entertainers.

“At the end of the day, my drag comes off, gets put into a suitcase and I go about my day as Jacob,” Valentine said. “That’s not the reality for the trans people these bills are truly targeting.”

While the LGBTQ+ community is still facing trials, REINE serves as a space where everyone can enjoy a drink and, on Saturday, a show. It’s already quite popular, with about 40 regulars who come in once or twice a week, Deppen said.

“Hell, they’ll wash dishes if we need it,” he joked about his loyal customers.

Visit [REINE’s Facebook page](#) for more information.