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By Hannah Goldfield

The other night at Harlem Hops, a new beer bar and restaurant on Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, a neighborhood old-timer peered at a fellow-patron's drink selection and gestured for the bartender's attention. "Interestingly enough, this young lady has, like, four different beers," he observed. The bartender laughed. "It's called a flight," he explained. "A flight?" replied the old-timer. "Like takeoff?" Harlem Hops is a thoroughly modern establishment, with a rotation of sixteen craft brews on tap, geeky tasting notes ("raw wheat, malted oat, milk sugar, lychee" for a sour I.P.A. from the Hudson Valley), and a mostly young, hip crowd.

You'll want to take a picture of the enormous, buttery Bavarian

pretzel, flecked with salt crystals, which arrives swinging from the kind of metal stand you might use to hang bananas on your kitchen counter. You'll want to return at least as many times as it takes to try each of the snappy-skinned bratwursts, from Jake's Handcrafted, in Brooklyn, served on griddled pretzel buns. The one made with chicken—laced with sansho peppercorn and sweet soy sauce—and the one that repurposes intensely smoky, burnt-brisket ends are especially exciting.

The owners, Kevin Bradford, Kim Harris, and Stacey Lee, three beer lovers in their forties, were tired of having to leave the neighborhood to get the variety they craved. They wanted to highlight small, local breweries, especially those run by brewers of color. They wanted to

excavate history, too. Did you know that some of the earliest evidence of beer-making, using warm-climate cereals like millet and sorghum, was found in Africa? That ancient Egyptians developed a malting process? That slaves in the American South brewed beer? Bradford, Harris, and Lee, all graduates of historically black colleges and universities, enlisted a historian named Tonya Hopkins, known as the Food Griot, to provide these reminders of the past, which are written in chalk on a pillar at the end of the bar. They also serve a whiskey, made in Tennessee, called Uncle Nearest; Nathan (Nearest) Green was a black master distiller believed to have taught Jack Daniel everything he knew. Where Jack Daniel's is harsh, the bartender argued—"the opposite of that

first gulp of water in the morning"—Uncle Nearest moves through your mouth "like a curl. It plays on your lips."

The whiskey went down easy—citrus on the nose, spicy caramel and vanilla on the palate—and paired well with a crispy "Gumapie," a tortilla wrapped like a sharp-cornered package around ground beef seasoned with habanero and African allspice, shipped up from a Virginia-based company started by a Ugandan refugee. The old-timer, who'd taken a phone call, sipped his own whiskey and shared his newfound trivia with whoever was on the other end of the line. "Uncle Nearest got ripped off by Jack Daniel," he said, laughing heartily. "I'd have been looking for him." (2268 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd. 646-998-3444. Bites \$6-\$12.)

