

Home Bartending Essentials

Having good bartending skills and knowing your way around your home bar will make you a very entertaining host at any get together you are having. Bartending is not complicated once you learn the basic terminology and skills. Once you have that knowledge, you can easily follow any recipe you find in a cocktail recipe book or online.

Our goal is to just give you the knowledge you need and skip the things that you will never need to know. We start with the basic terminology, next we move to what you need to stock your bar. We quickly move to what tools you will need and explain the basic techniques you will need to use. Since it is sometimes hard to visualize what is written about a technique, we have put in links to videos that should be helpful.

Now that you have the skills to bartend, we have included some recipes to the most popular drinks. We can only scratch the surface of the many drink recipes out there. You should be able to find many more on your own. This is one of the funniest parts of having a home bar. It is fun trying out new recipes.

We then answer a few common party planning questions and then as an added bonus, we have include the popular Apple Pie Moonshine Recipe and a few more of our favorites. Now let's get started.

BASIC BAR TERMINOLOGY

A lot of the terms and phrases listed below are standard throughout the industry. A good bartender will know his or her terminology inside out. Even though you're just tending bar at home, you're sure to impress people with your vast knowledge. Here are some of the more common terms used in bartending.

Box

Pour the drink into and out of a shaker, usually only once. This gives the drink a quick mixing without shaking

Call Drink

A liquor and mixer, of which the liquor is a name brand (ie. Tanqueray and Tonic, Bacardi and Coke, etc.)

Chaser

A chaser is a mixer that is consumed immediately after a straight shot of liquor to create a different taste.

Cocktail

This can be any of various alcoholic beverages consisting usually of brandy, whiskey, vodka, or gin combined with fruit juices or other liquors and often served chilled.

Collins

A drink similar to a sour which is served in a tall glass with soda water or seltzer water

Cooler

A drink consisting to ginger ale, soda water, and a fresh spiral or twist of citrus fruit rind and served in a Collins or highball glass

Crusta

A sour- type drink served in a glass that is completely lined with an orange or lemon peel cut in a continuous strip

Cup

A punch-type drink that is made up in quantities of cups or glasses in preference to a punch bowl

Daisy

An oversize drink of the sour type, normally made with rum or gin. It is served over crushed ice with a straw and sweetened with a fruit syrup

Lace

Normally applies to the last ingredient in a recipe meaning to pour on top of the drink

Eggnog

A traditional holiday drink containing a combination of eggs beaten with cream or milk, sugar, and a liquor such as rum, brandy, or bourbon

Fix

A sour-type drink similar to the daisy made with crushed ice in a large goblet

Fizz

An effervescent beverage – one which is carbonated and emits small bubbles

Flip

A chilled, creamy drink made of eggs, sugar, and a wine or spirit. Brandy and sherry flips are two of the better known kinds of flips

Frappe

This is a partially frozen often fruity drink. It is usually a mixture of ingredients served over a mound of crushed ice.

Grog

A rum-based beverage with water, fruit juice, and sugar commonly served in a large mug

Highball

Any spirit served with ice and soda in a medium to tall glass (a highball glass)

Julep

A drink made of bourbon, mint, sugar, and crushed ice

Lowball

A short drink made of spirits served with ice, water, or soda in a small glass

Mist

A liquor served over a glass filled with crushed ice – often as is the case with an after dinner drink

Mulls

A sweetened and spiced heated liquor, wine, or beer served as a hot punch

Neat

The consumption of a spirit as a straight, unaccompanied shot

Nip

A quarter of a bottle

Nightcap

Wine or liquor often consumed right before bedtime

On The Rocks

A drink served over ice

Pick-Me-Up

A drink designed to relieve the effects of overindulgence in alcohol

Punch

A party-size beverage consisting of fruit, fruit juices, flavorings and sweeteners, soft drinks, and a wine or liquor base

Rickey

A drink made of a liquor, usually gin, a half lime and soda water. It is sometimes sweetened and often served with ice

Shooter

A straight shot of liquor taken neat

Sling

A drink made with either brandy, whiskey, or gin along with lemon juice, sugar, and soda water. It is served both hot and cold.

Sour

A short drink consisting a liquor, lemon or lime juice and sugar

Toddy

A sweetened drink of liquor and hot water, often with spices

Tot

A small amount of liquor

Virgin

A non-alcoholic drink

Well Drink

A liquor and mixer of which neither are defined brands (ie. Gin and tonic, rum and coke)

Stocking a Home Bar

When stocking your home bar, you need to keep in mind how much entertaining you do and what types of drinks your friends and family like. Sure, it might be nice to be able to produce the ingredients for a Flaming Dr. Pepper, but if you only have one crazy friend who might ask you for that, the cost of the ingredients might just outweigh the need to have them on hand.

What should the typical home bar have on hand? Well, besides a healthy supply of beer and wine, here's a nice list to start with. (A fifth of each)

Gin
Vodka
Rum
Whiskey
Tequila
Brandy/Cognac

Fruits are important as garnishes, having plenty of the right fruits on hand can also be important.

Cherries
Lemons
Limes

Fruit juices are used as mixers with the liquor to make various drinks. Plus, having them on hand for non-drinker can be just as important!

Apple
Cranberry
Orange
Pineapple
Tomato

Making some of the more “exotic” drinks requires the mixing of liqueurs along with typical liquors and other additives to achieve the desired taste. Liqueurs can also be drunk on their own as shots or an after dinner nip.

Amaretto (almond)
Creme de Menthe (mint)
Jagermeister (herb)
Kahlua (coffee)
Schnapps (various flavors)
Triple Sec (orange)

There are other mixers you must have on hand besides fruit juices. Many drinks utilize popular soft drinks and other non-conventional ingredients for the drinks.

Cola
Ginger Ale
Grenadine
Sour Mix
Sprite/7-Up
Water
Tonic
Lemon and/or Lime Juice

Finally, you'll want to have plenty of garnishes around to make your drinks look appealing and taste yummy.

Ice
Maraschino Cherries
Olives (black/green)
Salt/Pepper Sugar
Tabasco Sauce
Worcestershire Sauce

Of course, now that you have the ingredients, you'll need the appropriate tools to do the job. The various tools include glassware, so let's see what you'll need for a home bar. The last thing you want to have happen is to have someone want a bottle of beer and be lacking a bottle opener. There are certain tools of the trade that are needed in all circumstances.

BARTENDING TOOLS

Stocking tools for a home bar will require a few staples you will definitely want to have.

Can Opener

Useful for opening cans of fruit juices

Corkscrew

For opening wine and champagne bottles

Cloths

For wiping surfaces and equipment. These should be damp and not wet.

Cutting Board

A heavy, laminated cutting board is best for slicing fruit and other garnishes

Bottle Opener

For opening screw top bottles

Cocktail Shaker

This is used for blending ingredients in cocktails and mixed drinks.

Electric Blender

Many cocktails require a blender to blend the ingredients smoothly together. This is useful for drinks with fruit pieces or ice cream etc.

Ice Bucket

A metal or insulated ice bucket keeps your ice cold and clean.

Ice Tongs and Scoops

Tongs are used to add ice to drinks.

Jigger/Shot Glass

This is used as a measurement tool.

Sharp Knife

For cutting fruit and garnishes

Glass and Containers:

Beer Mug

16 ounces – traditional beer container

Champagne Flute

6 ounces – tulip shaped glass designed to show off the bubbles from the champagne

Cocktail glass

This glass has a triangle-bowl design with a long stem, and is used for a wide range of straight-up (without ice) cocktails, including martinis, manhattans, metropolitans, and gimlets - also known as a martini glass.

Typical Size: 4-12 oz.

Collins glass

Shaped similarly to a highball glass, only taller, the Collins glass was originally used for the line of Collins gin drinks, and is now also commonly used for soft drinks, alcoholic juice, and tropical/exotic juices such as Mai Tai's.

Typical Size: 14 oz.

Highball glass

A straight-sided glass, often an elegant way to serve many types of mixed drinks, like those served on the rocks, shots, and mixer combined liquor drinks (i.e. gin and tonic).

Typical Size: 8-12 oz.

Hurricane Glass

This is a tall glass with a hurricane lamp shape used for exotic or tropical drinks

Margarita/Coupette glass

This slightly larger and rounded approach to a cocktail glass has a broad-rim for holding salt, ideal for margarita's. It is also used in daiquiris and other fruit drinks.

Typical Size: 12 oz.

Old-fashioned glass

A short, round so called "rocks" glass, suitable for cocktails or liquor served on the rocks, or "with a splash".

Typical Size: 8-10 oz.

Red wine glass

A clear, thin, stemmed glass with a round bowl tapering inward at the rim.

Typical Size: 8 oz.

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