

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.

Shot glass

This is a small glass suitable for vodka, whiskey and other liquors. Many "shot" mixed drinks also call for shot glasses.
Typical Size: 1.5 oz.

BARTENDING TECHNIQUES

It is essential to master some of the basic techniques of bartending before you start.

Measuring Alcohol

One of the most important things to do when making a drink is to follow the recipe. You should never put more alcohol in a drink than what the recipes calls for. Too much alcohol will make the drink taste bad. There are two ways to measure alcohol. One is with a jigger. The jigger is very accurate and easy to use. It is a little slow, so a lot of people “free pour”. You have to practice this with a jigger to get it right, but basically you are counting to 4 to get an ounce. So a half an ounce is a 2 count, $\frac{3}{4}$ ounce a 3 count, etc.

To practice this, get a 1 ounce jigger and pour into the jigger. Count 1, 2, 3, 4. Now see what you have. Too much, then speed up the count. Not enough, count faster.

[Measuring Alcohol Video](#)

Shaking

Shaking is the method by which you use a cocktail shaker to mix ingredients together and chill them simultaneously. The object is to almost freeze the drink while breaking down and combining the ingredients.

Normally, this is done with ice cubes added to the shaker about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to the top. Then pour in the ingredients, hold the shaker in both hands with one hand on top and one hand supporting the base.

Give the shaker a short, sharp, snappy shake. DO NOT rock your cocktail to sleep. When water has begun to condense on the surface of the shaker, the cocktail is chilled and ready to be strained.

[Boston Shaker Video](#)

Straining

Most cocktail shakers are sold with a build-in strainer or hawthorn strainer. When a drink calls for straining, ensure you've used ice cubes, as crushed ice tends to clog the strainer of a standard shaker. If a drink is required shaken with crushed ice (i.e. Shirley Temple), it is to be served unstrained.

Stirring

You can stir cocktails effectively with a metal or glass rod in a mixing glass. If you use ice, use them to prevent dilution and strain the contents into a glass when the surface of the mixing glass begins to collect condensation.

Muddling

To extract the most flavor from certain fresh ingredients such as fruit or mint garnishes, you should crush the ingredient with the [muddler](#) on the back end of your bar spoon, or with a pestle.

[Muddling Video](#)

Blending

An electric blender is often needed for recipes containing fruit or other ingredients that do not break down by shaking. Blending is a great way to combine these ingredients with others creating a smooth, ready to serve mixture.

Some recipes call for ice to be placed in the blender in which case you would use a suitable amount of crushed ice to produce a smooth, pleasant tasting drink.

Building

When building a cocktail, the ingredients are poured into the glass in which the cocktail will be served. Usually, the ingredients are floated on top of each other, but occasionally, a swizzle stick is put in the glass, allowing the ingredients to be mixed.

[Drink Building Video](#)

Layering

To layer or float an ingredient such as cream liquor on top of another, use the rounded, back part of a spoon and rest it against the inside of a glass. Slowly pour the liquor down the spoon and into the glass. The ingredient should run down the inside of the glass and remains separated from the ingredient below it.

[Layering Video](#)

Flaming

Flaming is the method by which a cocktail or liquor is set alight, normally to enhance the flavor of a drink. It should only be attempted with caution, and for the above reason only, not to simply look cool.

Some liquor will ignite quite easily if their proof is high. Heating a small amount of the liquor in a spoon will cause the alcohol to collect at the top, which can then be easily lit. You can then pour this over the prepared ingredients.

Don't add alcohol to ignited drinks and don't leave them unattended. Light them where they pose no danger to anybody else, and ensure no objects can possibly come into contact with any flames from the drink. Always extinguish a flaming drink before consuming it.

There's nothing more depressing than a "frou frou" drink that has no decoration to it. Here are some of the more popular decoration techniques.

[Flaming Video](#)

DECORATING YOUR COCKTAILS

Decoration of a drink will normally consist of one or two fruit, herb, or cherry garnishes that either complement the flavor of the drink, contrast with the color, or both. It is important that you avoid overpowering the drink. When garnishing with fruit, be careful with the size. If it is too thin, it's flimsy and uneventful. A too-thick slice can unbalance the look and even flavor of the cocktail.

Citrus Twists

To make a citrus twist, cut a thin slice of the fruit crosswise and simply twist to serve on the side of a glass or in it.

Citrus Peel Spirals

To make a spiral of citrus peel, use a parer or vegetable peeler to cut away the skin, working in a circular motion. Take care not to cut into the bitter pith.

Citrus Peel Knots

Use strips of peel and carefully tie each strip into a knot. Drop into the drink for a nice garnish.

Cherry-it

Use to drizzle around the inside of the glass before you make the drink. Can be served at room temperature or chilled.

[Fruit Cutting Videos](#)

Cocktail Sticks

These extremely useful wooden cocktail sticks are needed for spearing through pieces of fruit and cherries. These are not re - usable. Plastic cocktail sticks, however, are re-usable provided they are washed and boiled.

Frosting/Rimming

Margaritas and other mixed drinks often call for the rim of the glass to be coated with salt, sugar, or some other ingredient. This is known as frosting or rimming. The easiest way to do this is to rub the rim of the glass with a slice of citrus fruit and then dip the very edge of the rim into a small bowl filled with the sugar or salt.

[Rimming Video](#)

Maraschino Cherries

You should always have a plentiful supply of red maraschino cherries to decorate your cocktails with. These are the most widely used of decorations, as well as being available in multiple colors and flavors.

Olives or Onions

Martinis are often garnished with olives or cocktail onions. Simply skewer one or two with a toothpick and drop into the drink.

Straws

Straws are essential and go well with many cocktails. These, of course, should never be re-used.

DRINK RECIPES

There are a myriad of drinks out there concocted in someone's basement or kitchen when there were just a few drops of liquor left and some type of mixer. Others have been created by bored bartenders who thought certain combinations might taste good together. Still others are staples that are ordered nearly every day in a bar.

We can't include all drink recipes, but here are some of the most popular ones.

Alabama Slammer

1/2 oz amaretto almond liqueur
1/2 oz Southern Comfort® peach
liqueur 1/2 oz sloe gin
1 splash orange juice
1 splash sweet and sour mix

Pour above ingredients into a stainless steel shaker over ice and shake until completely cold. Strain into an old-fashioned glass and serve.

Amaretto Sour

1 1/2 oz amaretto almond liqueur
1 - 2 splashes sweet and sour mix

Pour the amaretto liqueur into a cocktail shaker half-filled with ice cubes. Add a splash or two of sweet and sour mix, and shake well. Strain or pour into an old-fashioned glass, garnish with a maraschino cherry and a slice of orange, and serve.Brandy Alexander

1 1/2 oz brandy
1 oz dark crème de cacao
1 oz half-and-half
1/4 tsp grated nutmeg

In a shaker half-filled with ice cubes, combine the brandy, crème de cacao, and half-and-half. Shake well. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with the nutmeg.

Bloody Mary

1 1/2 oz vodka
3 oz tomato juice
1 dash lemon juice
1/2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
2 - 3 drops Tabasco® sauce
1 lime wedge

Shake all ingredients (except lime wedge) with ice and strain into an old-fashioned glass over ice cubes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add the wedge of lime and serve.

Blue Hawaiian

1 oz light rum
1 cherry
2 oz pineapple juice
1 oz Blue Curacao liqueur
1 oz cream of coconut
1 slice pineapple

Blend light rum, blue Curacao, pineapple juice, and cream of coconut with one cup ice in an electric blender at high speed. Pour contents into a highball glass. Decorate with the slice of pineapple and a cherry.

Cosmopolitan

1 oz vodka
1/2 oz triple sec
1/2 oz lime juice
1/2 oz cranberry juice

Shake vodka, triple sec, lime and cranberry juice vigorously in a shaker with ice. Strain into a martini glass, garnish with a lime wedge on the rim, and serve.

Fuzzy Navel

1 part peach schnapps
1 part orange juice

Mix equal parts of each ingredient in a highball glass, top with ice, and serve.

Gibson

1 1/2 oz gin
3/4 oz vermouth
2 cocktail onions

Stir gin and vermouth over ice cubes in a mixing glass. Strain into a cocktail glass. Add the cocktail onions and serve.

Gimlet

2 oz gin

1/2 oz lime juice

1 lime wedge

Pour the gin and lime juice into a mixing glass half-filled with ice cubes. Stir well. Strain into a cocktail glass and garnish with the lime wedge.

Harvey Wallbanger

1 oz vodka

1/2 oz Galliano® herbal

liqueur 4 oz orange juice

Pour vodka and orange juice into a Collins glass over ice cubes and stir. Float Galliano on top and serve.

Kamikaze

1 oz vodka

1 oz triple sec

1 oz lime juice

Shake all ingredients with ice, strain into an old-fashioned glass over ice cubes, and serve.

Lemon Drop

1/2 oz vodka

1/2 oz lemon juice

1 sugar cube

Add sugar to the rim of an old-fashioned glass, and drop a cube or packet of sugar into the bottom of the glass. Pour vodka and lemon juice into a stainless steel shaker over ice, and shake until completely cold. Pour into the prepared old-fashioned glass, and serve.

Long Island Iced Tea

1 part vodka

1 part tequila

1 part rum

1 part gin

1 part triple sec

1 1/2 parts sweet and sour mix

1 splash cola

Mix ingredients together over ice in a glass. Pour into a shaker and give one brisk shake. Pour back into the glass and make sure there is a touch of fizz at the top. Garnish with lemon.

Mai Tai

1 oz light rum
1/2 oz crème de almond
1/2 oz triple sec
Sweet and sour mix
Pineapple juice
1/2 oz Myer's® dark rum

Pour light rum, crème de almond and triple sec, in order, into a Collins glass. Almost fill with equal parts of sweet and sour mix and pineapple juice. Add dark rum, a large straw, and serve unstirred.

Margarita

1 1/2 oz tequila
1/2 oz triple sec
1 oz lime juice
salt

Rub the rim of a cocktail glass with lime juice, and dip in salt. Shake all ingredients with ice, strain into the glass, and serve.

Mojito

3 fresh mint sprigs
2 tsp sugar
3 tbsp fresh lime juice
1 1/2 oz light rum
club soda

In a tall thin glass, crush part of the mint with a fork to coat the inside. Add the sugar and lime juice and stir thoroughly. Top with ice. Add rum and mix. Top off with *chilled* club soda (or seltzer). Add a lemon slice and the remaining mint, and serve.

Mudslide

1 1/2 oz Bailey's® Irish cream
1/2 oz Kahlua® coffee
liqueur

Pour Hershey's chocolate syrup around the inside rim of a rocks glass. Fill with ice, add ingredients, and serve.

Old Fashioned

2 oz blended whiskey
1 sugar cube
1 dash bitters
1 slice lemon
1 cherry
1 slice orange

Combine the sugar cube, bitters, and 1 tsp. water in an old-fashioned glass. Muddle well, add blended whiskey, and stir. Add a twist of lemon peel and ice cubes. Add slices of orange and lemon and top with the cherry. Serve with a swizzle stick.

Pina Colada

3 oz light rum
3 tbsp coconut milk
3 tbsp crushed pineapples

Put all ingredients into an electric blender with 2 cups of crushed ice. Blend at a high speed for a short length of time. Strain into a Collins glass and serve with a straw

Rob Roy

1 1/2 oz Scotch whisky
3/4 oz sweet vermouth
Stir ingredients with ice, strain into a cocktail glass, and serve.

Party Planning Questions Answered

How much ice do I need?

Between one-half-a-pound to one-pound of ice per person.

How much wine should you buy?

You should get 5 glasses of wine per 750ml bottle. Plan on a half a bottle per person.

How much beer should I stock?

Plan 2-4 beers per person.

How many disposable glasses do I need?

Plan on using 3 glasses per person.

How many cocktails per person should I plan on?

Plan on serving 3 cocktails per person

What should I serve?

Make up a cocktail menu for the party. Think of a theme or the type of people you are inviting . Use this to plan on what supplies you need.

Bonus Recipes

Apple Pie Moonshine Recipe

1 Gal. of apple juice

1 Gal. of apple cider

1 1/2 cups white sugar

2 1/2 cups brown sugar

8 [cinnamon sticks](#)

1 Fifth of Everclear 190 Proof Grain Alcohol

Add the apple juice, the apple cider, all the sugar, and all the cinnamon sticks into a large boiling pot. Heat all this to a boil. Then remove the pot from the stove, and let it cool down to room temperature.

Once it reaches room temperature, gradually stir in the Everclear 190 Proof Grain Alcohol. I found that you should use a little less than the whole fifth. (You might want to save back a little of the apple juice to mix back in if it taste too strong).

To store it (a glass container always is better), put the *Apple Moonshine* into clean [Mason Jar](#) along with one of cinnamon sticks in each jar. I also found that the large glass gallon wine jug work well, too.

Store in a cool dry place or the refrigerator.

As Apple Pie Moonshine ages, it will taste even better. I have found that for some odd reason it seems to have an “alcohol” taste on the day that you make it. After it sits for about a day, that taste goes away and you can’t taste any alcohol in it at all. I am not sure why this happens, but don’t be discouraged if you take a sip and it is not what you were expecting. Wait a day and you will be happy with the results!

Serve cold or warm on the lowest setting in a crock pot.

Peach Pie Moonshine Recipe

½ gallon (64 oz.) Welch’s White Grape Peach Juice
1 ½ cups White Sugar
1 can Sliced Peaches (15-16 oz.)
3 Cinnamon Sticks
½ cup (4oz.) Peach Schnapps

Bring this to a boil, then let it simmer covered for about an hour. Let it cool down to room temperature then add the following:

1 cup (8-9 oz.) 190 proof Grain Alcohol, Everclear, Graves, etc.
½ cup (4 oz.) Peach Schnapps

Strain this before storing

To store it (a glass container always is better), put the *PeachPie Moonshine* into clean Mason Jar along with one of cinnamon

sticks in each jar. I also found that the large glass gallon wine jug work well, too.

Store in a cool dry place or the refrigerator.

How to Make Green Beer

This is super simple. Place one drop of green food coloring in a clear glass. The pour in a light colored beer in the glass. Instant green beer. You could use blue and yellow food coloring if you didn't have green, but it will have mixed results. Don't put in too much food coloring. A drop will do it.

Pineapple Upside-Down Cake Martini Recipe

1 oz vanilla vodka
2 oz pineapple juice
1 dash grenadine syrup

Shake pineapple juice and vanilla vodka with ice in a tumbler
Pour into a martini cocktail glass. Add dash of grenadine, and serve.

Recommended Recourses

[Ultimate Home Bar Set-Up Kit](#)

[Big Bad-Ass Book of Cocktails: 1,500 Recipes to Mix It Up!](#)

[Libbey 12-Piece International Beer Glasses Set](#)

[Art Of the Drink, Volume 1: Bar Essentials](#)