



THE **12**

BOTTLE

BAR

“Erudite, concise, and
always interesting—
just the sort of
person I imagine
myself to be when
I am drinking.”

—DANIEL HANDLER

**A DOZEN BOTTLES.
HUNDREDS OF COCKTAILS.
A NEW WAY TO DRINK.**

David Solmonson & Lesley Jacobs Solmonson

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DEDICATION

To Raleigh, the greatest cocktail we've ever made.

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INTRODUCTION

With the classic cocktail renaissance upon us, it has never been easier to enjoy a well-crafted drink. Bars across the country—and the world—are embracing old-school practices. Recipes from master mixologists appear regularly in magazines, and the new breed of cocktail book on the market extends far beyond the *Old Mr. Boston*. So why another cocktail book, particularly from two people who make no claims to being professional bartenders?

The road to the 12 Bottle Bar began, aptly enough, with a drink. A Penicillin, to be exact, which, at the time, no one knew would become a modern cocktail classic. It was the creation of bartender Sam Ross, but the man who made it for us was Chef David Myers. When we met Chef Myers more than ten years ago, we were utterly disillusioned with the lack of creativity in the Los Angeles food scene. Myers and his restaurant Sona changed all that. Not only did Sona quickly become the restaurant version of the Cheers bar for us, but it also became the platform upon which we expanded our culinary knowledge—and, as it turned out, our cocktail understanding and enthusiasm.

One night, when the restaurant was getting quiet, Chef Myers snuck out of the kitchen, grinning like a kid at Christmas. “I’ve got to make something for you,” he said, grabbing a shaker and assembling a bunch of ingredients—Scotch, honey syrup, ginger syrup, and a mist of a second, peaty Scotch. As he mixed up a drink, he told us he had just gotten back from a speakeasy bar in New York called Milk & Honey. That was where he met Sasha Petraske, Milk & Honey’s owner, and tasted bartender Sam Ross’s Penicillin, which rocked his (and soon after, our) world. Now he said, he was on a mission to kick-start the L.A. cocktail renaissance.

Sona eventually closed its doors, but David Myers’s promise to get L.A. cocktail culture going held fast. His bistro, *Comme Ça*, was one of the first spots in the city to focus on pre-Prohibition cocktails and, to date, has launched more bartending careers than you can count. As we tasted more and more of these drinks, we quickly started to realize that there was an enormous gap—more like a chasm, really—in our spirits knowledge, and that the missing link just happened to be the golden age of cocktails. That was the era when a bartender and showman named Jerry Thomas—a name you will hear us reference time and time again—ruled the proverbial roost. That was the era when, not only because it tasted better but because you could do no differently, cocktail ingredients were made from scratch, ice was carved with a pick, and bartenders were serious career professionals.

Suddenly, we felt a little cheated. After all, we had grown up in a world where ingredients like sour mix, “techniques” like topping off an Old Fashioned with club soda, and drinks like the Long Island Iced Tea were the standard. We started to

understand what cocktails could be and we were thirsty to learn more.

THE WHY AND WHAT OF 12 BOTTLES

Like most modern cocktail lovers, we went a little crazy in the beginning, grabbing whatever we could find to fill in the blanks—David Wondrich’s *Imbibe!* was a game changer for us, as was David A. Embury’s *The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks* (because Embury, like us, was not a professional but an enthusiast who saw cocktails as an art form in their own right). Much as home cooks enthusiastically try out recipes and experiment with flavors, we enjoyed tinkering in the liquor cabinet. After all, when the price of the average “classic” cocktail often starts around \$15, going out becomes less about having fun and more of a financial investment. However, when we started trying to recreate the recipes we tasted in bars, read about in magazines, and found in modern mixology books, it turned out to be arduous, expensive, and sometimes downright impossible. Why was it that every new recipe demanded expensive ingredients that we didn’t normally have on hand? As cocktail lovers, we admittedly have a pretty extensive liquor cabinet, but even we were amazed by how few drink recipes we could make without buying the newest bottle of Crème d’Esoterica, usually at \$50 or more a pop (not exactly cost-effective when all you need is one teaspoon).

Of course, all of this just made us ask the question: How do we make the same classic cocktails at home that dot the pages of glossy magazines and are on offer in almost every forward-looking bar, as well (if not better), and without breaking the bank? And so, late into the night after long workdays, an idea was born.

We loved classic cocktails, but not the overly complicated or costly modern riffs on them. We believed that enough drinks could be made with a limited set of bottles to satisfy the majority of home bartenders. With that conceit, we launched 12bottlebar.com—built on the premise of “12 Bottles, Endless Tasty Concoctions”—in October of 2009. Through the site we were able to connect with the cocktail community at large—which was incredibly generous to two admitted neophytes like us. When the opportunity for this book came along, the relationships we had cultivated while writing on the site bloomed into friendships that produced many lovely cocktails, bits of advice, and stories for the book. For those contributions we are, corny as it sounds, eternally grateful.

But back to the basic idea: Why 12 Bottles? When we first started studying recipes, we quickly realized two very important things. First, most contemporary cocktail books don’t cater specifically to the home bartender, that is, those of us with limited space and a limited budget. Not to be defeated, we started seeking out old-school cocktail books from the formative days of drinking (the late 1800s mainly), a time when the selection of spirits was much more limited. Which brings us to point number two.

It turns out that a vast number of classic cocktails—both historic and modern—can

be made with a pretty obtainable and maintainable collection of hooch. This made perfect sense to us. Every home cook keeps a well-stocked pantry from which to draw ingredients. Why shouldn't home bartenders have a similar arsenal, a sort of spirits pantry? The answer is simple—they should.

HOW THIS WORKS

The 12 Bottle Bar is the home bartender's arsenal, pantry, tool kit—the answer to entertaining confidently. With only twelve bottles (seven spirits, one liqueur, two vermouths, and two bitters) you can make literally hundreds of classic cocktail recipes—more than you ever will, or at least, ever should, drink. Add to that a little basic knowledge of fresh fruit juices and simple-to-make syrups (on pages 369 to 381; goodbye, sour mix!), and you have everything you need to produce freshly made, old-school, budget-minded cocktails at home.

By now you are probably asking, why twelve bottles and why these particular twelve bottles? While you can certainly go with fewer bottles if, for example, you dislike rum or whiskey or gin, these twelve bottles cover the vast spectrum of drink profiles and styles. (That said, if you want to trim the list, see page 9.) And rather than just go with a predictable list, we've thrown in genever, one of the oldest spirits known to man. So, here are our essential bottles.

BRANDY, DRY GIN, AMBER RUM, WHISKEY These are the “big four,” the cornerstones of any good bar. Based on the recipes in existence, there are simply some spirits that you must have in your tool kit.

WHITE RUM, VODKA Because summer isn't the same without Daiquiris or Mojitos, we added white rum. (If you feel the same way about Margaritas, don't despair—we've got you covered on page 7.) And while vodka is the red-headed stepchild of most classically minded bars, it remains the bestselling spirit in North America. (Plus, we think it's a great base for personal expression.)

GENEVER Not quite gin, not quite whiskey, genever was one of the most important spirits of the nineteenth century, and it's making a comeback. Plus, having a bottle that you'll have to explain to your guests will make you deep and mysterious. If you fancy yourself fit company for drinking alongside William of Orange, Doc Holliday, or Papa Hemingway, genever is the drink for you.

ORANGE LIQUEUR Used in more cocktails than any other liqueur, the sweet-tart profile of a good orange liqueur can also help define more cocktails than any other ingredient.

SWEET VERMOUTH & DRY VERMOUTH You can't make the two most

important cocktails around—the Manhattan and the Martini—or any proper martini-style drink for that matter, without vermouth.

AROMATIC BITTERS & ORANGE BITTERS Bitters are the spices of the cocktail world. Our choices, aromatic and orange, are like any good seasoning—you simply can't mix without them.

(A note about bitters and vermouth: While they are rarely the central element in a cocktail, a number of significant drinks are made with one or the other, or both. For this reason, we have condensed the pairings—sweet and dry vermouth, aromatic and orange bitters—into two chapters. And for the same reason, those chapters offer scant recipes specific to these ingredients; rather, the cocktails offered are the most vivid illustrations of the bottles' use.)

With these basic bottles and some well-chosen mixers at your disposal, we promise you can make hundreds of classic and classic-inspired recipes. And rather than hitting you for the tens of thousands of dollars it costs to stock a typical high-end bar, the full 12 Bottle Bar will set you back as little as \$200.

Speaking of saving money, did we mention how much cheaper it is to mix individual drinks at home (see sidebar, [page 6](#))? If you take that \$15 cocktail and add in the cost of gas, parking, or a taxi, we think you'll see the wisdom of inviting a few friends over, throwing on some Kings of Convenience, and mastering the art of the cocktail party (we'll show you how). Not only is it much more economical to make your own ingredients—syrups, garnishes, infusions, and whatnot—it's tastier (and very easy) to boot. And you'll find yourself in good company: The original nineteenth-century bartenders used only freshly made ingredients in their drinks and it made all the difference.

WHERE'S THE TEQUILA?

When our friends see our 12 Bottle list, the first thing they often ask is: Where's the tequila? Well, aside from the Margarita, the Paloma, and the Tequila Sunrise, tequila just isn't called for in that many old-school cocktails. Granted, bartenders today are finding ever more inventive ways to use tequila (and mezcal). But since efficiency is our goal, tequila just didn't make the cut.

If you are a tequila stalwart, by all means hang on to your bottle. And just so there are no hard feelings, here's a hard-to-beat Margarita recipe from the Too Hot Tamales, because even though we are 12 Bottle Bar, we do enjoy a tasty Margarita.

TOO HOT TAMALES MARGARITA

GLASS: MARTINI | ICE: CUBED | MAKES: 1 DRINK

Margarita salt or kosher salt

Lime wedge

2 ounces añejo tequila

1 ounce orange liqueur

½ ounce strained, freshly squeezed lime juice

½ ounce strained, freshly squeezed lemon juice

Lime slice, for garnish

1 Cover a small plate with salt to a depth of ¼ inch. Halve the lime wedge widthwise and run a cut edge around the outer rim of a martini glass to dampen it. Roll the glass in the salt to coat the outer rim.

2 Combine the tequila, orange liqueur, lime juice, and lemon juice in a mixing glass. Fill the glass three-quarters full with ice cubes, cover with a Boston shaker tin, and shake vigorously until thoroughly chilled, 15 seconds.

3 Strain into the prepared glass and garnish with the lime slice.

The 12 Bottle Bar DEFINED AND TALLIED

“A DOZEN BOTTLES. HUNDREDS OF COCKTAILS.”

That is the basic motto we live by, but you might also add “within a budget.” Here is our master list, not including mixers or garnishes. The prices are for 750-milliliter bottles (except small bottles such as bitters, or where indicated), and being overly cautious, we’ve tried to capture the *highest* average price for each item—you’re likely to find many of these items at lower prices.

	LOW	HIGH
BRANDY	\$15	\$40
DRY GIN	\$11	\$40
GENEVER	\$35	\$50
AMBER RUM	\$20	\$30
WHITE RUM	\$16	\$30
RYE WHISKEY	\$18	\$55
VODKA	\$20	\$26
ORANGE LIQUEUR	\$32	\$34
DRY VERMOUTH	\$11	\$17
SWEET VERMOUTH	\$8	\$35 (1L)
AROMATIC BITTERS	\$10	\$13
ORANGE BITTERS	\$6	\$9
TOTALS:	\$202	\$379

At a basic level, the full 12 Bottle Bar will set you back about \$200, before tax. How many drinks will it make? Figuring just the main seven bottles of spirits (we use the liqueur, vermouth, and bitters sparingly), at 1½ ounces of alcohol per drink, we get a figure of 116 drinks. Again, with a little rough, back-of-the-napkin math, we come up with a cost of about \$1.70 per drink. Factor in the cost of mixers, syrups, juices, etc., and \$2.50 per drink is a safe round number. Not too bad.

IT’S OKAY TO START SMALL

Should the prospect of amassing twelve bottles seem overwhelming, we’ve given you the tools to customize your own one- ([page 29](#)), three- ([page 41](#)), or four-bottle ([page 49](#)) bar with drinks to match. Have just one lonely bottle of booze on your shelf? Add

water, citrus, and sugar, and *presto*, you have some real options. Do you drink only gin? Then go for a three-bottle setup of gin, dry vermouth, and orange bitters to open your eyes to the wonders of the juniper spirit. Want to add a bit more pizzazz? Add orange liqueur, and you're done. You'll be surprised by the myriad drink possibilities. The bottom line is: No need to fear—it's your bar.

FANCY A DRINK?

To make mixing (and consuming) drinks even easier, we've taken a somewhat unorthodox approach to classifying our cocktails. When we have friends over, particularly those who don't drink a lot or drink only one thing, we always start by asking them a few simple questions.

- Do you have a favorite spirit?
- What are you in the mood for?
- Are you into sweet or tangy?
- How strong do you like your drinks?

Just as people have food preferences, they have liquor preferences (flavors are flavors, wherever you find them), but they don't always know it. Each chapter focuses on one spirit (gin, rum, and so on), while the cocktails in each chapter fall into three basic categories organized by flavor profile. In classifying our drinks by taste and sensation, not style of drink, we hope to give you a better way to understand your own palate and to figure out what your friends like, too. Here are our categories—certainly not the traditional cocktail classifications, to be sure—and how we define them.

SWEET & FRUITY These drinks depend on a high proportion of fruit or fruit juice and/or some form of sugar, making them easy to drink. Tiki drinks and anything with fruit in the name tend to fall into this category. We put the Cuba Libre (Rum and Coke) here, too.

TANGY & CITRUSY Many of these drinks sport the official label “the sour,” defined mostly by the inclusion of fresh citrus juice. The Whiskey Sour and the Daiquiri are classic examples.

STRONG These are for people who really like to taste the character of the booze. It's worth noting that drinks of this ilk are often perceptually, if not actually, stronger in terms of alcohol content. The truth is that a shot of rye (approximately 1½ ounces) may have exactly the same amount of alcohol as a Whiskey Sour made with that same rye, but because, in the sour, the whiskey shares the stage with other elements, the drink is perceived to be lighter in taste. Thus, in our terms, a “strong” drink could be old-school or modern, but what defines it is the fact that the liquor takes center stage.

EASIER THAN YOU THINK

Now, if you find the idea of mixing drinks to be a little bit daunting, not to worry. Here's the big secret of 12 Bottle Bar: With the information in this book, you can make the best cocktails on the planet, hands down. How do we know this? Because the best cocktails can be made by anyone. If you can measure liquid into little tiny cups and shake things really well, then you too can make the greatest cocktails invented by mankind (as well as the original ones we've snuck in with them).

But bear in mind that this is not a cocktail book—it's a road map. Our goal is not simply to offer you hundreds of recipes to practice by rote; our goal is to put you in command of your home drink making. It's our hope that the 12 Bottle Bar will not only let you enjoy the process, but also return the cocktail to its roots as a drink for relaxing, alone or with friends.

Jerry Thomas

THE BABE RUTH OF BARTENDERS

Before we jump in, we need to tell you about a fellow whose name will flow freely through this book. Let us introduce you to Jerry Thomas (1830–1885). Perhaps we are leaning toward hyperbole, but without Jerry Thomas, modern cocktail culture wouldn't exist. Jerry Thomas—bartender, showman, advocate for fresh, house-made ingredients—was America's first real bartender, and his showmanship, coupled with his infinitely tasty concoctions, helped popularize cocktails across America. He was, for all intents, Tom Cruise in the movie *Cocktail*, albeit nineteenth-century style.

When you see bartenders sporting vests, bow ties, and crisp white shirts, it's because of Jerry Thomas. The man was quite the dandy, using his generous salary (more than the Vice President of the United States earned at the time) to deck himself out in natty finery. No T-shirts need apply.

When the best modern bartenders loudly champion the freshness of ingredients, hand chip their own ice, and geek out over increasingly esoteric syrups, shrubs, and liqueurs, it's because of Jerry Thomas. In the gilded age of the cocktail, which started in the latter half of the 1800s and ended just prior to Prohibition in 1920, everything was prepared in house; there was no such thing as imitation sour mix or the ersatz cocktail cherries we know today.

When you see bartenders doing flashy tricks like lighting orange peels on fire, it's because of Jerry Thomas. Indeed, his signature drink, the Blue Blazer, required the bartender to ignite a measure of whiskey and pour it back and forth through the air, creating a free-flowing flame as it cascaded from one mixing glass to the other.

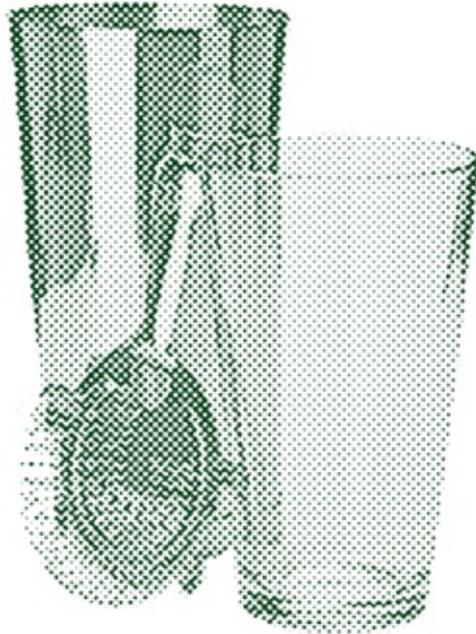
When you see the proliferation of cocktail books on the market, yes ours included, it's because of Jerry Thomas. His book, *Jerry Thomas' Bar-Tenders*

Guide, also known as *How to Mix Drinks, or The Bon-Vivant's Companion*, was the first collection of drink recipes published in the United States, thus codifying what had, until then, been an oral tradition. It not only demystified cocktail making, but also spread the tradition to others, allowing it to evolve.

Let's just summarize this way: Jerry Thomas was one rockin' dude, and *12 Bottle Bar* wouldn't even exist if it weren't for him. Cheers to you, J. T. May your memory ever live on.

CHAPTER 1

Tools of the Trade



Any craft requires tools. Baking calls for a pan; sautéing needs a skillet. Making drinks is no different. So, before you get started shaking and stirring, you will need to assemble some basic items.

A quick glance around your kitchen may reveal that you already have a good number of these tools. The suggestions below reflect our own experiences whittling down tools to the bare minimum. As to brands, choose what works for you. You won't mix drinks if you don't enjoy the process.

HARDWARE

If there's one thing that makes the head-first dive into mixology much less intimidating than, say, the culinary arts, it's the cost of the equipment. Whereas a sous-vide water oven can set you back \$300 plus (and, if that's sticker shock, don't bother to Google "La Cornue"), everything you need to shake and stir like a pro can be had for about \$50. As hobbies go, that's tough to beat. After a while, you may want to invest in a vintage shaker (our friend Mike uses a vintage bullet shell casing) or a set of Erlenmeyer flasks (those conical, long-necked beakers prized by mad scientists) to store your juices and syrups, but to get started, here's all you need.



BOSTON SHAKER There are two basic kinds of shakers on the market. The first is the cobbler shaker, which typically comprises three metal pieces: a large cup, a strainer/spout that fits into the cup, and a cap. This is the kind of cocktail tool you find at department stores or boutiques. Skip it. While cobbler shakers can be pretty, they're 90 percent show and provide very little practicality. Plus, they tend to jam shut after a vigorous shake, making the process of churning out drinks much more arduous than it should be.

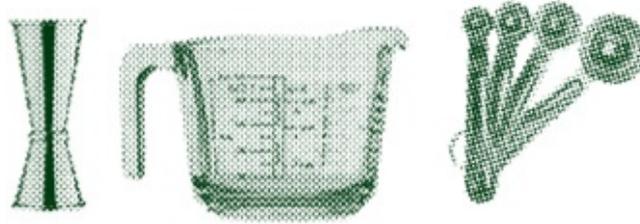
The better way (the only way, if you ask us) to go is a Boston shaker. Here, the only parts are a metal cup and a mixing glass—the best being a standard pint glass—that wedges in snugly at the top. The advantages of the Boston shaker are myriad. If you're making multiple drinks, you can have a collection of mixing glasses lined up. The transparency of the glass also lets you see what drinks you have in front of you, an often-useful reminder. Unlike their cobbler cousins, Boston shakers don't tend to jam, and a quick thump with the heel of your hand is typically all that's needed to separate the halves. If you have any concerns about the fragility of a pint glass, leave them behind. These are barroom workhorses; they can hold their own.



BAR SPOON While buying a special spoon for stirring cocktails may seem like an extravagance to some, the lowly bar spoon falls squarely in the category of “having the right tool for the job.” A couple of key design elements separate it from its flatware friends. The length of the spoon allows you to keep your fingers out of the mixing glass, and the spiral design of the handle facilitates the quick twirling motion you'll need to properly stir at a steady, rapid pace.

Tip:
BEND THE SPOON

Bending your bar spoon about 30 degrees at a point 4 to 5 inches above the bowl will make your stirring more ergonomic. Should you be able to bend the spoon with your mind, certainly wait until an audience has been assembled.



JIGGERS / MEASURING CUPS / SPOONS Here are the basic measurements you're going to need to make cocktails quickly and often: 2 ounces, 1½ ounces, 1 ounce, ¾ ounce, ½ ounce, and ¼ ounce, as well as a range of tablespoons and teaspoons for smaller measures. These are made easy with two tools: a collection of variously sized stainless steel jiggers or a set of accurate measuring spoons and cups (we really like Oxo brand). What's the difference? Jiggers look a little cooler, whereas standard size measuring cups allow you to compound larger measurements of ingredients (especially helpful if you are mixing more than one drink at a time) before you add them to your mixing glass. Measuring spoons are the choice for very small amounts that don't have corresponding jigger or cup measures. Depending on what equipment you have or choose to purchase, you can use the conversions noted below.

Jiggers to Kitchen MEASUREMENT

Should you not have a collection of jiggers handy, here are useful conversions.

½ ounce = 1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons

¾ ounce = 4½ teaspoons

1 ounce = 2 tablespoons = 6 teaspoons

1½ ounces = 3 tablespoons

2 ounces = ¼ cup = 4 tablespoon



STRAINER If you ever use only one strainer, make it a Hawthorne. Like the bar spoon, the Hawthorne strainer is a tool that does one job and does it extremely well. You'll recognize it as the metal ping-pong-paddle-looking thing with the large spring running around three quarters of its circumference. It's the spring that not only makes it a Hawthorne, but also allows it to accommodate a wide variety of glass sizes. There's no need to spend good money here; the simplest models do the trick.

Should you feel limited by just one strainer, give the julep strainer a look. While it's designed to fit only certain glass sizes and requires a fraction more skill to use than a Hawthorne, the julep strainer is not only retro, but quite elegant in the hand. Use it on your stirred drinks and the Hawthorne on your shaken drinks, and your friends will admire your technique.



MUDDLER Really, you don't need a muddler—you could just as easily use the peaceful end of a hammer, but we think you care more about your drinks than that. As with many of the tools on this list, there's no great mystery to the muddler. It muddles. More to the point, it's heavy enough to mash fruit and whatnot and typically contains spiked "teeth" that tear ingredients. How you use a muddler (gently) is much more important than what kind you buy—just make sure it's relatively heavy and comfortable to use.

Tip:
HOW TO MUDDLE

It's said that to a hammer, everything looks like a nail. Following that logic, the

unfortunate police-baton shape of a muddler leads most people to wield it as if attempting to pacify their ingredients. We don't beat our cocktail components into submission, however. No, we massage and gently coerce them to release their magical goodness.

For delicate herbs, such as mint, the muddler is used to release the inherent oils. Herbs will typically give these up easily and only a gentle "nudge" of leaves around the glass by the muddler is required to facilitate the surrender.

Citrus requires a bit more muscle, but only just so. Using the flat or ribbed end of the muddler, simply press on the citrus repeatedly. There is no need to smash it with the power of Thor.

Respect your ingredients, and you'll get the best from them.

OTHER HANDY ITEMS

CHEF'S KNIFE A low-priced but well-regarded brand is Victorinox

CHEESECLOTH Useful for straining spices or muddled solids from drinks or as an alternative to a fine-mesh sieve

CUTTING BOARD(S)

FINE-MESH SIEVE For removing pits, pulp, and other large undrinkables

FOOD PROCESSOR OR BLENDER

MANUAL CITRUS JUICE PRESS One for lemons and another for limes comes in handy

MICROPLANE ZESTER For zesting citrus and grating whole nutmeg

MISTER A small, usually metal bottle of about 2 to 4 ounces, with a spray nozzle; used for delivering a controlled mist of spirit or other liquid (such as Tincture of Clove, [page 389](#)) over the top of a cocktail

PARING KNIFE For slicing fruit and more

TOOTHPICKS OR COCKTAIL SKEWERS For holding olives, berries, and other small garnishes

Various bottles and jars For infusions and liqueurs

VEGETABLE PEELER A swivel-head variety is the easiest to use

ICE

Treatises could be written—and most likely have been—about ice. Author Paul Theroux thought ice was so magical that he built an entire book, *The Mosquito Coast*, around it. In it, a man named Allie Fox packs up his family and leads them into the jungles of South America to bring ice to the natives, crying “Ice is civilization!”

The cocktail community would certainly agree, albeit for different reasons, of course. Indeed, when easily accessible ice made its first appearance in the early 1800s, thanks to the visionary Frederic “Ice King” Tudor, the world—and eventually cocktails along with it—was irrevocably changed. Back then, Tudor “harvested” his ice in 300-pound blocks from local Boston ponds. Nowadays, the average soul can reach into his freezer and grab an ice cube whenever he wants it. The problem is that standard-issue freezer ice—clunky, often made from unfiltered water, and “flavored” with whatever scents float in the freezer—or, heaven have mercy, standard supermarket bagged ice with its often stale smell and inconsistent shapes—is, well, pretty horrible. Capitalizing on this fact, companies dedicated solely to cocktail ice have sprung up in the wake of the mixology renaissance.

MY KINGDOM FOR A STRAW

As America expanded its borders west, and technology advanced, ice production became cheaper and more localized, allowing ice to be used in such whimsical fashions as for chilling beverages. What better way to celebrate the conquest of the West than to enjoy an iced drink thousands of miles away from the nearest metropolis?

Of course, those cold, cold libations were all fine and dandy until ice met tooth. Cavity-stricken, decayed nineteenth-century tooth, that is. Fortunately one Marvin C. Stone, a college-educated fellow and Civil War veteran, solved this problem in 1888 by inventing the modern paper drinking straw. Paper replaced the hollow rye grass tube used until then, which tended to make drinks taste somewhat “grassy.” Ice and tooth could now be kept safely apart (not to mention nixing those herbaceous flavors), while one’s cooling elixir was sipped down.

THE RULES OF ICE

For our purposes, we’re going to stick to the more practical aspects of cocktail ice, meaning how and why it’s used and how to get the best out of it. Because, along with the dilution and chilling it provides, the proper application of ice to a mixed drink is as

important as the proper application of heat to a sauté. That said, here are some basic rules to keep in mind.

RULE #1 Think of ice as an ingredient. You wouldn't use bottled sour mix or bruised fruit in your cocktails. Why compromise on your ice, which forms the foundation on which a drink is built?

RULE #2 When and if you make ice at home, use good neutral water (see “How to Make Ice at Home,” [following](#)). You get out what you put in—it's as simple as that.

RULE #3 Consider how long you shake or stir your drinks. Shaking and stirring times vary markedly depending on the size, shape, and amount of ice you use. A slow stir with large ice cubes will result in a less diluted drink than an energetic shake with crushed ice. Which leads us to . . .

RULE #4 Consider the size and function of your ice. Are you using a single large cube or spear? Several smaller cubes? A scoop of crushed ice? The bigger the ice, the slower it will melt. Crushed ice, used in drinks like juleps or brambles, melts quickly, so you get a quick chill as well as a controlled and constant dilution of liquor. In contrast, a chunk of ice—say a large cube in an Old Fashioned or a large block of ice in a bowl of punch—melts and dilutes more slowly, preserving the potency of the drink, but still softening it over time.

RULE #5 Consider the temperature of your ice. Is it truly frozen? Or did you—accidentally, misguidedly, foolishly—put it in an ice bucket for ease of use? Melty ice is watery ice, and that means the water on the surface of the ice will further dilute your drink. Not a good idea if you don't want a watery drink.

RULE #6 Add ice last, just before you are ready to mix, whether by shaking or stirring. This allows you to measure the liquid, should you suspect you may have forgotten something, and in the event you're distracted or called away midassembly, your drink will happily wait for you, undiluted.

RULE #7 Give your ice a helping hand. If you can, store your glassware in the freezer with the proper ice cube(s) alongside. This is particularly useful for parties. A cold glass means an even colder drink.

TO SHAKE OR STIR

Common wisdom dictates that if your ingredients are particularly clear, you may prefer to stir in order to avoid a cloudy drink. Shaking causes aeration of the drink and may produce tiny ice crystals in the liquid. If you are using citrus or syrups, a