



Belly Up to Your Own Home Bar

By Matt Smithmier

You've planned a big party at your home for next week. Invitations sent, music chosen. And now you're ready to buy the liquor, but a keg in a trash can with ice just doesn't cut it. So what do you do?

Creating a home bar is not as daunting as it sounds. In fact, a basic set-up can satisfy almost every drinker's thirst, and you'll come off looking like the party hero.

Step one: Mark your territory.

Think about space — near a sink and refrigerator. Also, it's helpful to store all of liquors and bar supplies in a locked cabinet to keep them away from heat, sunlight and children.

Step two: Stock up on supplies.

"The tools are pretty much basic," says Brett Lofton of Olive-or-Twist Liquor, Platte City. "Basically a shaker, a strainer and a bar spoon will pretty much cover just about anything you want to do."

Lofton says many liquor stores carry a basic bar set that includes these kinds of tools. "Unless you wanted to be really spiffy and go with something that was silver-plated or whatever, a shaker is a shaker. There's not really one that's better than another."

The rest of your supplies are probably already in your kitchen, like a blender for frozen drinks and knives for cutting fruit and garnishes.

Step three: Raise a glass.

Glassware can be a confusing part of the home bar, but fortunately many of your glasses can multitask. The basics are shot glasses, high-ball (or "rocks") glasses, tumblers, tulip glasses (often used for tropical drinks), margarita glasses and wine glasses.

But also know your audience. If you're hosting a cigar party, for example, and plan to break open the brandy, have plenty of snifters handy.

Step four: Get the sauce.

Choices abound, but there are some liquor staples you should focus on. Lofton recommends the "big four" to start.

1. Whiskey — Divided into four categories (bourbon, Canadian, Irish and scotch), he recommends including at least a bourbon and a scotch to start.

2. Rum — Go with the light rum over the dark for more mixing choices.

3. Vodka — Start with a straight vodka and upgrade with flavored choices later if you want.

4. Tequila — The backbone of a good margarita, it's a must for your home bar.

Gin could also be on the list, depending on your crowd. "It's definitely a love-it-or-hate-it kind of thing, and it kind of waxes and wanes in popularity," Lofton says. Also, pick a couple liqueurs for variety. An amaretto, a coffee liqueur (like Kahlúa) and an Irish-cream liqueur (like Baileys) are good choices.

Step five: Mix it up.

Pick up some club soda, tonic water, a white soda (i.e., 7UP, Sprite), a cola, a variety of juices (cranberry, pineapple, etc.) and some sour mix. And stock up on the "big four" of fruit, Lofton says — lemons, limes, oranges and cherries.

Step six: Serve with a smile!

Just think of the home bar as an investment and something that can be improved.

"You don't have to necessarily go out and buy \$30 or \$40 bottles of liquor starting out," Lofton says. "Most everything is available somewhere in the \$15 range for a good brand. And then you can go upward from there."

Now go buy a home bartender's guide so you can make all of those drinks! Flaming Viking anyone? ■

Snowman Twinkle Martini

This martini cocktail is twinkling with winter flavor.

Ingredients

1 ounce
Goldschlager
Cinammon
Schnapps
1/2 ounce of
Bacardi 151 rum
2 teaspoons
Kahlula coffee liqueur

The Mix

Combine all ingredients in a shaker 3/4 full of cracked ice and shake, shake, shake!

Strain into 2 well chilled martini glasses and enjoy!

Recipe Credit:
www.martiniart.com