

Chapter

4

The Best Bar in Town—Yours

In This Chapter

- ◆ Stocking your bar
- ◆ A word about responsible pouring

You've got the skills. You've got the tools. What's left? The liquor, of course. You know what you like to drink, but for entertaining, what exactly is a good, basic stock of liquor? That all depends on your purposes and how serious you want to be about your home bar. I give you several bar situations in this chapter and a shopping list of liquors and mixers to stock it with. Then, so you'll know what to do with all your new liquor, I give you some tips on hosting an A-1 shindig.

Stocking Up: The Minimum to Maximum Bar

Everyone's got a different style of entertaining. Some of us like to have the all-out bash, while others prefer small, intimate gatherings. And then there are those of us who just want to be prepared for ... anything! Whatever your penchant or personal style, I've got some handy-dandy shopping lists for you in this chapter for the minimum, medium, and maxed-out bar. Pick your preferred party style, photocopy the appropriate list, and head out to stock up.

Always Have ...

For your average home bar, you want to be able to offer the basics. For this, keep 1 full bottle of each of the following:

- Bourbon
- Brandy
- Gin
- Rum
- Tequila
- Vodka
- Vermouth (dry and sweet)
- Whisky
- Red wine
- White wine
- Club soda
- Cola (regular and diet)
- Bitters
- Ginger ale
- Orange juice
- Tonic water

As well as:

- Lemons (for garnish and juicing)
- Limes (for garnish and juicing)
- Maraschino cherries
- Olives
- Salt (coarse)
- Sugar (granulated and superfine)



Spills

There's nothing more disastrous to a cocktail party than forgetting to buy ice. Oddly, it's the one thing many people always miscalculate or just completely forget to purchase. When you entertain, be sure you factor in about 2 pounds ice per person. Your freezer automatically makes ice? Great, but it won't make enough for your party, and it takes an awfully long time for it to refill. Plus, ice that's been sitting in the freezer takes on other odors, so be sure your ice is fresh and there's enough of it!

Gettin' Serious

A more serious bar takes the basic bar up a notch or two. If you're a little more serious about your home bar, have 1 full bottle of the following:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bourbon | <input type="checkbox"/> Rum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brandy | <input type="checkbox"/> Scotch (blended) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beer (amber and dark) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tequila |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coffee liqueur | <input type="checkbox"/> Triple sec |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gin | <input type="checkbox"/> Vodka |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curaçao (orange) | <input type="checkbox"/> Vermouth (dry and sweet) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crème de cacao | <input type="checkbox"/> Red wine (3 to 4 bottles) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Melon liqueur | <input type="checkbox"/> White wine (3 to 4 bottles) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schnapps (peppermint and peach) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sparkling wine (2 bottles) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastis | |

For mixers:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bitters: | <input type="checkbox"/> Tonic water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orange | <input type="checkbox"/> Cream (light and heavy) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angostura | <input type="checkbox"/> Tabasco sauce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Club soda | <input type="checkbox"/> Worcestershire sauce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cola (regular and diet) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cocktail olives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cranberry juice | <input type="checkbox"/> Cocktail onions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ginger ale | <input type="checkbox"/> Lemons (for garnish and juicing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grapefruit juice | <input type="checkbox"/> Limes (for garnish and juicing) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tomato juice | <input type="checkbox"/> Rose's lime juice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grenadine | <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar (granulated and superfine) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lemon-lime soda | <input type="checkbox"/> Salt (coarse) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Orange juice | <input type="checkbox"/> Maraschino cherries |



Cocktail Conversation

You probably have heard at one time or another that maraschino cherries aren't so good for you. True, at one time, less-than-safe dyes were used for the standard bright-red hue, but no more.

Today's maraschinos are soaked in a sulfur solution, which strips the cherry of its natural flavor and color, and the fruit's rinsed for several days to wash out most of the residual sulfites (although it does contain them in the finished product, so if you're allergic, forewarned is forearmed). Then comes the color: the cherries go through an up to 5-week process of soaking in corn syrup and food coloring to give them that super-sweet flavor and bright-red (or green, depending on the kind) color.

Super Styleie

If your desire is to have a your-wish-is-my-command kind of bar, 1 full bottle of each of the following ought to do it:

- Bourbon:
 - A medium grade for mixing
 - A higher grade for sipping
- Brandy:
 - Basic
 - Fruit (American and/or French)
 - Cognac
- Canadian whisky
- Gin
- Liqueurs:
 - Amaretto
 - Chambord
 - Chartreuse (green and/or yellow)
 - Cherry (maraschino) liqueur
 - Crème de bananes
 - Crème de cacao
 - Crème de cassis
 - Crème de menthe
 - Crème de noyaux
 - Coffee liqueur
 - Curaçao (orange, blue, green)
 - Frangelico
 - Irish cream
 - Kummel
 - Melon
 - Sambuca
 - Schnapps (your favorite flavors)
 - Southern Comfort
 - Pimm's
- Red wine (6 or more bottles of your favorite)
- Rum:
 - Dark
 - Light
 - Añejo
- Sake
- Scotch whisky
- Single malt whisky
- Blended whisky
- Sloe gin
- Tennessee whiskey
- Tequila:
 - Blanco or joven abocado
 - Reposado
 - Añejo
- Triple sec
- Vodka:
 - Russian or Polish
 - Fruit-flavored
 - Vanilla, pepper, et al.
- Vermouth:
 - Dry
 - Sweet
 - French
- White wine (6 or more bottles of your favorite)



Cocktail Conversation

For a party, a red zinfandel is a great full-bodied, fruit-forward way to go. It's got enough personality to stand on its own, but it also pairs well with many hors d'oeuvres. Ravenswood makes an excellent, reasonably priced option. For white, a dry Riesling is an excellent hors d'oeuvres option. Trefethen estate dry Riesling is also a favorite and is usually less than \$20 a bottle. Remember, 1 bottle of wine will provide about 4 to 5 wine glasses worth per person, so plan accordingly for how many guests you will have.

For mixers:

- Bitters:
 - Orange
 - Angostura
 - Peychaud
- Club soda
- Cream of coconut
- Cola (regular and diet)
- Cranberry juice
- Ginger ale
- Grapefruit juice
- Lemon-lime soda
- Orange juice
- Passion fruit juice
- Pineapple juice
- Nectars:
 - Mango
 - Papaya
 - Peach

- Tomato juice
- Tonic water
- Cream (light and heavy)
- Tabasco sauce
- Worcestershire sauce

For garnishes and extras:

- Cocktail olives (an assortment of your favorite stuffed varieties)
- Cocktail onions
- Green cherries
- Lemons
- Limes
- Mint
- Sugar (granulated and superfine)
- Salt (coarse)
- Maraschino cherries



Cocktail Conversation

When setting up your bar, arrange it so the mixing's easy. Group your main liquors, liqueurs, mixers, and garnishes together for easy access. Always be sure you have ice nearby. Keep an appropriate stock of glassware and barware, too (remember the list in Chapter 2!), as well as bar towels or paper towels for quick cleanups. And of course, don't forget the music!

All's Well That Ends Well

You've made—and will continue to make—a million happy memories with your friends and family. This is what life's all about: the people we love and the experiences we have together. The fact of the matter is that alcohol can often be part of a celebration or gathering, and even in the smallest of quantities, gets us a little giddy. In large quantities it impairs judgment.

It's downright hilarious to allow your near and dear to reveal, after throwing back a few cocktails, that they know all the words to every single song on the soundtrack to *Grease*; it's quite another to let them get into a car and drive off half-crocked. Inner Olivia Newton John-ness can be laughed at; dangerous driving, incarceration, or worse cannot. None of us is a saint, or at least nobody I know. We all make mistakes; we all are guilty of errors in judgment. Drinking and driving is not a mistake any of us can afford. The cost can be quite dear: at best embarrassing, and at worst, life-taking. You know this. I know you know this. I'm not giving you a finger-wagging you haven't heard before. I've had friends take my keys from me, too—and boy, was I glad they did.

It's not always so easy to do the responsible thing. In fact, in those moments when you're a little high from the good times and good spirits, it's a downright drag to snap into caretaker, responsible-adult mode. But it's what you do—it's what you *must* do—for the people you love in your life and for those you don't know whose lives you may well affect by one bad decision that could have been averted.

Even when you're armed with the best intentions, though, sometimes it can be hard to know how much is too much. What follows are a few charts listing the *blood alcohol content* (BAC) for drinks consumed by men and women, plus how time factors into the equation to sober up. It's quite eye opening, isn't it?

I tell you what—I'll use myself as a guinea pig. Let's say I consume 2 drinks. That doesn't sound excessive, right? Two little drinks. No big deal. Well, actually, at my weight if I consume 2 drinks, I will have reached the limit at which I would be arrested for DWI if I chose to get in my car. Wow.

Metabolic Drinking Rates

Body Weight (lb.)	Number of Drinks									
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten
<i>For Males</i>										
100	.043	.087	.130	.174	.217	.261	.304	.348	.391	.435
125	.034	.069	.103	.139	.173	.209	.242	.278	.312	.346
150	.029	.058	.087	.116	.145	.174	.203	.232	.261	.290
175	.025	.050	.075	.100	.125	.150	.175	.200	.225	.250
200	.022	.043	.065	.087	.108	.130	.152	.174	.195	.217
225	.019	.039	.058	.078	.097	.117	.136	.156	.175	.198
250	.017	.035	.052	.070	.087	.105	.122	.139	.156	.173
<i>For Females</i>										
100	.050	.101	.152	.203	.253	.234	.355	.406	.456	.507
125	.040	.080	.120	.162	.202	.244	.282	.324	.364	.404
150	.034	.068	.101	.135	.169	.203	.237	.271	.304	.338
175	.029	.058	.087	.117	.146	.175	.204	.233	.262	.292
200	.026	.050	.078	.101	.126	.152	.177	.203	.227	.253
225	.022	.045	.068	.091	.113	.136	.159	.182	.207	.227
250	.020	.041	.061	.082	.010	.122	.142	.162	.182	.202

The Time Factor

Hours Since First Drink	Subtract This from BAC
1	.015
2	.030
3	.045
4	.060
5	.075
6	.090

Source: Evans, Glen and Robert O'Brien, The Encyclopedia of Alcoholism, 1991.

Okay, party people. You are now officially armed for any soirée you want to swan over as the host with the most. You can mix, garnish, sugar, and shake—and you even know when to tell your guests (and yourself) when it's time to call it quits. What's next? Recipes, of course! Read on

for a multitude of mixables, from the classics to the new fantastics. I highly encourage you to experiment. If you think a recipe needs more of this or less of that, make notes. Take a pen to this puppy and scribble all over it with your own preferences. One person's perfect martini is another's imperfect use of vermouth. Just be sure you do one thing for me: have fun (safely!) and remember—good times are only as good as those with whom you share them.

The Least You Need to Know

- ◆ Think about how much you entertain and what kind of parties you tend to throw. Let that be your guideline for creating a home bar.
- ◆ If you're just starting out, start small—you can always add to it later.
- ◆ *Do NOT drink and drive; do NOT let your friends and family—or even people you don't like so much—drink and drive.* It is always a dangerous and foolish endeavor.