

A woman with long, wavy red hair is smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a pink and white horizontally striped halter-neck top. In her hands, she holds a large glass filled with a light-colored beverage, ice cubes, and several slices of lime. A red straw is inserted into the drink. The background is a dimly lit bar with various bottles of alcohol, including several bottles of Vodka, and red and white striped awnings hanging from the ceiling.

Customer Service & Common Sense

How to Become a Better Bartender

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Lesson 2

Customer Service

Customer contact is always a nice touch and greeting a customer with a handshake and a smile is a great start to the customer experience. Your introduction to someone new... who just joined you at the bar is the start of hopefully exceeding their expectations. It's also a great way to start a conversation with a stranger who just might become your next great regular customer. By "working" the bar, you keep your customers at the bar longer; and the longer they stay, the larger the bill and hopefully, the bigger your tip. When customers decide to stay at your bar for dinner, primarily due to your bubbly personality and excellent service, their cost goes from a \$50 bar tab to a dinner with a bottle of wine and may now approach \$500.

- Pay attention to their needs
- Know your drinks and food menu
- Keep their area clean
- Cater to their every need
- Keep them involved and entertained

There's an expectation that you make customers feel welcome and comfortable, with a friendly smile and upbeat attitude, while serving high-quality drinks with [great customer service](#); bartenders are very customer-focused. A bartender is there to listen to people or entertain a customer telling you their stories. However, as a bartender you're still fully expected to create brilliant drinks for guests whenever they ask and you'll often utilize the recipes and ingredients provided by the mixologist on staff or the house recipes.

Combining the knowledge of making drinks with the skill of keeping customers happy and entertained is the key to being a great bartender. On the flip side, a mixologist is an individual who seeks to push the boundaries of said experience through careful and precise delivery of items that affect the senses.

A bartender also needs to:

- Be a humble and a human being... talk as a human... and should they should not bring their ego to work.
- Show empathy and gratitude to your patrons.
- Check out the environment; your bar... and the bar scenes you compete with in your immediate area.
- Be conscientious, be transparent and talk to everyone.
- Ask for, and act on customer feedback; it's one of the few ways to better understand your customer base. Try to understand what they like, and more importantly, what they don't like. That education can be priceless.
- Surprise and delight your customers and exceed their expectations.
- Don't ignore your patrons... go where your customers are and spend a little time with everyone sitting on your bar.
- Learn the classics... the drinks common to the industry, regardless of where you are located.

Customers will have high expectations and if your business can't meet those expectations, they will leave you for your competitors. They will have no loyalty. If that sounds harsh, well, it is. In addition to getting a product or service that works for them, they want to frequent establishments that go above and beyond for them.

Tip of the day: The most used skill a bartender can have is guest hospitality. being able to connect with guests is much more important than just making cocktail. Many guests don't come into your establishment just to have drinks, they may be coming to see their favorite bartender. One technical skill that can be a huge asset is the pour. It helps create an experience and show for the guest, which is part of the fun of cocktail making. a slow pour pour-spout is a must for a controlled pour and better show.

An Anniversary Celebration

The couple sat at her bar waiting for their dinner reservations, they were a little early because they wanted to get an early start on their tenth wedding anniversary celebration. The bartender delivered him a martini and poured her a glass of chardonnay, "John" asked if she had any "special" cocktails so that he could give the celebration a quick start.

The bartender asked him if he liked Green Chartreuse and the smile on his face gave her the answer. She placed in front of him a Green Chartreuse with several dashes of Tabasco, shaken, not stirred; and after downing it, he asked for another. It wasn't often that the bartender could share her love of Green Chartreuse with a customer and it helped develop an instant rapport.

As they started to get to know each other, she found out that their names were John and Susan, and that they tried to celebrate *every* anniversary in this restaurant. When they asked about dinner specials and how certain items were prepared, they were thankful of the bartender's extensive knowledge of the menu. As the bartender got busier with the normal Happy Hour rush, she was still able to give them attention while John received another "special" cocktail. When the hostess came up to collect them for their reservation, they told her to cancel it, and that they decided to stay at the bar. The bartender went to the other side of the bar to set up their place settings and to spend a little more quality time with them, not much, but enough to keep them happy. The dinner tab with an expensive bottle of wine was \$500; dessert, after dinner cordials, good company and great customer service... *priceless*.

Tip of the day: The customer's expectations were far exceeded and the tip on the five hundred- dollar tab far exceeded the tip she would have received if they had kept their original dinner reservation; and a new regular customer is born.

To Die For

I had just finished my shift and found a seat at the bar for my "after shift cocktail". Krista was behind the bar and had just started her shift when someone she had an interest in walked into the place. He was tall, very good looking and it was obvious that she wanted him really, really, badly; and no one at her bar was going to get anything resembling good service, including me.

One of our mutual regular customers, Joe, must have had a bad day at the office because he didn't take too kindly to the attention she was giving to the next love of her life. Joe was a character and was usually fun to have as a guest, but he was right, and I totally understood when he took huge offense to being ignored. After starting a disagreement with Krista that eventually lasted weeks, he stormed out of the restaurant. I was more interested in watching Krista working her magic with her next want-to-be boyfriend than I may have ignored my personal thirst needs, but a very impatient Joe was less than impressed and maybe more than just a little jealous.

Over the next couple of weeks, Joe would leave the bar every time Krista started her shift, and that was costing us all a little bit of money. With the encouragement of management, Krista agreed to apologize; I'm pretty sure she didn't feel like she did anything wrong, but I thought it was a smart move... *after all, he was a good tipper.*

The club's owner, Christian, bought Joe a Black Label and water, and as I finished my shift, Krista walked behind the bar. Before Joe had a chance to move, she placed in front of Joe a "blow job", Baileys, Kahlua, and whipped cream, in a shot glass; something I've *never* seen Joe order, but he looked at me, then back at Krista, and drank it. It was *her* way of saying "I'm sorry", and after another five minutes, she placed another one in front of him; and without missing a beat, he downed it. He finished off another one ten minutes later, but when he tried to get up to go to the bathroom; he immediately collapsed to the floor. We all panicked and Christian, a few of our customers and staff, all ran to help. Krista was told to drive him home, and after they pulled up to his house, he literally fell out of her car and crawled on his hands and knees to his front door; it was one hell of a way to find out that he was hypoglycemic... *those "blow jobs" are pure sugar.*

Years later, Joe still tells the story: "I'm a very married man... but after the first ten or so years, sex is pretty much nonexistent. There I was, in my favorite bar, feeling great with a beautiful bartender apologizing to me, who knew? Granted, it had been a while, but when Krista gave me three blow jobs in twenty minutes... *I damn near died!*"

Tip of the day: Know your regular customers and pay attention. more importantly, pay attention to why you are behind the bar to begin with. Krista's lack of attention caused a regular customer to stay away from the bar for weeks, a loss of income for the bar and the bartenders... and pouring several shots of a sweet cocktail filled with sugar to a customer suffering from diabetes or is hypoglycemic, is just stupid. the way joe tells it, it makes for a great story, but he could have died.

Paying attention - yet again

Even when a bartender is new, a good bar presence is critical to success, for both the bartender, and the bar; and there will never be a good excuse for poor service. Candy was in the middle of her shift. She was always a joy to watch... from a purely physical point of view; but she needed more than just a little work on her bartending skills. It wasn't busy, but steady, and she was caught up in a conversation on the other side of a very large rectangular bar and never once looked up to see what was going on around her. I had been sitting in front of an empty wine glass for quite a while, but as I mentioned, she was a joy to watch, and I wasn't in any hurry.

The couple that just sat down at the other end of the bar apparently didn't share my appreciation for a perfectly formed ass in extremely tight orange shorts; and they were getting mad. As Candy finally made her way around the bar, she walked right past them on her way to the cash register and without so much of a smile. A few minutes later, she walked past them again with no acknowledgement or greeting. It wasn't until she shared a few more flirtatious minutes with the guys on the other side of the bar that she finally made it to the couple to take their order. They ordered a couple of beers, but it was obvious that they weren't happy.

Another guest came up and sat between the couple and me, and waited, and waited, and waited, but Candy was in "short-timers" mode and was counting the minutes until she finished her shift. About ten minutes later the shift change started and the woman next to me still hadn't been greeted and I had just finished polishing my still empty wine glass for the third time. Candy was finally hailed by the customer, but made no excuse for taking so long; and I took the opportunity to order my wine and pay my tab.

The woman turned to me to vent about how she was the wrong sex to expect any type of good service... the bartender had spent all of her time flirting with male customers. She told me that she had read some reviews online about how bad the service was, and she wanted to find out herself, and she did. Before leaving, she informed me that she was going home to log onto her computer so that she could place her own nasty review. From Twitter to Yelp, it's just too easy. The customer left after paying and I noticed that she left the exact amount of her check.

At about the same time, the couple sitting in the corner walked out after looking at the menu, but without ordering food or finishing their beers, they also didn't leave a tip. After paying my bill, my tip was half of what I normally would have leave, and Candy was still clueless.

Tip of the day: A simple smile and a short greeting would have allowed the bartender to make her rounds, taking new orders, keeping all of the customers happy, and still be able to flirt. If customers are sitting at the bar with the express purpose of flirting with the pretty bartender... they will never leave; and the less time the bartender spends with them, the longer they will stay and the more money she will make.

And again

The restaurant was fast becoming one of my favorite "go-to" day stops. I could always count on good looking, friendly and knowledgeable bartenders, regardless of the time of day. I walked in and found two female bartenders behind the bar with only two customers sitting at it, and I would make it three. As I approached, one of them greeted me and asked if I would be joining them at the bar for a drink and some lunch. I smiled and said yes as she placed a drink menu, a wine menu, and a lunch menu in front of me.

I quickly chose an excellent glass of red wine and looked over the menu. My wine was placed in front of me as I put the menu down and that was the last time the bartender gave me any attention. A second bartender who remembered me from a previous visit came by to say hi and spent a few minutes in delightful banter and then left. For the entire time it took me to drink my glass of wine, neither of the bartenders had made an effort to ask if I was ready to order any food.

I am a quiet person and usually patient as I admire the scenery and gently swirl my wine. I made several attempts to flag one down or to make eye contact with either of the bartenders so that I could order; but it wasn't until I placed money on the bar to pay for my drink before the second bartender finally came back... the menu was still in front of me. As I got up to leave, the bar had a few more customers, but nothing that two bartenders wouldn't have been able to handle.

Tip of the day: I would probably have stayed for at least two drinks, if not three, while having lunch. my bill with tip came to \$17.00 but could have been closer to \$75.00 if either of them had paid attention.

Common Sense

Common sense can make your job so much more enjoyable and profitable. Use it to stop a friend from drinking too much or combine it with a little personality and create your own style when dealing with your off-the-wall customers. Has your customer had too much to drink? A DUI conviction can cost your customer his driver's license with possible jail time, and that's if no one gets hurt. You may piss him off when you cut him off... but he'll be back in a couple of days to apologize or yell at you... either way, they'll be back. Who is he at the bar with if not his wife? Do you really care? Or should you just offer good judgment and service and leave the moral issues to those better qualified to help.

- Know your customers
- Know your personal strengths and weaknesses
- Learn your customer's strengths and weaknesses

Common sense and manners

Listen up... bartenders don't usually own the place, and they don't set the prices, so complaining to them isn't going to do anything for the patron or their check. A point of fact is our jobs are worth a lot more than the extra couple bucks you might throw our way in that moment when you're trying to get something for less than retail.

If a patron doesn't have any money, they should be wise about what they buy... most bars will have shot specials or discounted beers that you can recommend. If the customer only has twenty dollars to spend, they may want to just stay at home with a six-pack of their favorite beer, rather than spend it for just one at a bar; but it's the bartender's call on how to handle it. They can diplomatically suggest drink alternatives to better serve the customer and leave a little for a TIP! It's how you pay your rent. Obviously if the service sucks, you won't get a tip, but if the drink is the way your patron likes it, and they're served in a timely manner by a polite staff member, you, then your patron may be gratuitous, regardless of how much or how little money they have.

Always say please and thank you. It's just good manners. What many people may not know, is that servers spend about ninety percent of their night complaining about rude and demanding customers, and your face *will* be remembered the next time you come in... *so be nice*.

Tip of the day: Being a customer doesn't give them the right to be "entitled"; but as their bartender, being polite and considerate is part of your job.

It's a small world

Lori was a statuesque woman, forty-two years old, and was probably one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. If someone had told me that she had just flown in from Paris to make a movie, I would have believed it, she was **that** beautiful. I could not put into words just how happy I was to learn that she only lived a block away from the restaurant and that she was considered one of our best, regular customers. Her favorite spot in the lounge was at the bar, sitting next to the waitress station... *I was in heaven*.

As we got to know each other better, I would take a few moments before the start of my shift, to kneel next to her, so that she could massage my back and neck, (she had great hands). I had thought that I was pretty good at giving a woman a massage, but Lori made me look like a rank amateur. She would drive her fingers very deep into the soft areas and muscles around my shoulders and when she was done, I felt like the weight of the world had been lifted from my shoulders. It might not have been considered professional, but *it was a great way to start my shift*.

I was new to the area and had been thinking about changing apartments to move closer to work when Lori offered me one of her bedrooms. She lived in a large, five-bedroom house with her two daughters, and the maid's quarters were attached to the kitchen; the good news was that they had no maid. It included a bedroom with small sitting area, a master bathroom, and full access to the kitchen. It sounded perfect but before I could make a decision, Lori felt that I would need to know a few things about her family.

Lori was one of my best customers, a very good tipper, and our conversations had always been light and fun, but she had kept her personal life very private. She wasn't interested in giving me all the details, but she decided to start a modeling career and to be more specific... *nude modeling*. She had become so successful at it, that she was able to pay off the mortgage on her home and live quite comfortably. When her daughters saw what mom was up to, they decided to share in the fun and profit as well. As Lori finished telling me her story, she was concerned that I wouldn't be able to handle the fact that mom and her two daughters were nude models, and that they were in the habit of sunbathing in their backyard... *nude*. *Who was I to argue with the photographers that insisted that they have no tan lines?*

It took about a minute and a half to compose myself and tell Lori, with a straight face, that I appreciated her honesty, and I was sure, that as long as my bedroom and bath were *isolated*, that they would probably never see me; it would absolutely be no problem at all. The next step would be for her to bring in her daughters to meet me and if they all agreed, I would be able to move in that weekend.

Three nude models, and I'm going to be living with them... all I would have to do was give a really good first impression to Lori's daughters. The three of them came into my bar the next day, Lori took up her usual position next to the waitress station and started to introduce her daughters, but when daughter number one, Shelly, looked up, she smiled and said hi Joe, nice to see you again; and daughter number two, Sally, chimed in and said, so this is where you work asshole.

I was pretty well screwed. I had met Shelly last week at a friend's bar and I spent a weekend with Sally about a month earlier. It didn't take long for Lori to realize that I had already "hooked up" with both of her daughters and it became very obvious, very quickly, that not only was I not going to be moving in this weekend, I had already lost a very good customer.

Tip of the day: It is a very small world out there, and one should always try to keep business and personal lives separate. definitely a lack of common sense on my part, and when to flirt and not to flirt is also an issue; but i definitely needed to do a better job at paying attention.

Common sense and relationships

After a quick two-week courtship, she was my fiancée; I was head over heels in love with her and asked her to marry me. Being the intelligent woman that she was, her acceptance came with a long list of conditions; I only had two. First, she wasn't allowed in my bar, and second, I would stay out of her church if she would agree to stay out of Las Vegas; both seemed very reasonable to me at the time.

My future wife had gotten into the habit of sitting at the end of my bar to watch me work, and flirt, but I could have up to six women on my bar at any given time. These women were on my bar for many different reasons but flirting with the bartender would always be at the top of the list. The longer these women stayed, the bigger their checks would be, and the bigger my tips would be. Most of these women were available to any opportunistic bartender and would often stay at the bar for long hours hoping to get "lucky" with the bartender. None of these women would stay for more than a few minutes and one drink if they knew that the bartender's soon to be wife was watching his every move from the end of the bar.

I explained to my future bride that flirting and building the regular customer base was how I made my living. I also made it plain that she needed to trust me; and that when she woke up in the morning, I would be there, watching her put on her makeup. It made sense and is something that she never had a reason to question.

Tip of the day: A bartender pays their bills with the money they earn from tips, not the minimum wage salary they get paid by management. It is critical that a bartender be allowed to work the bar as he or she sees fit; to generate the profitability for their employer as well as themselves.

Flirting

As I watched Sandy start her shift, I felt good about hiring her. She had only limited experience in the basics of bartending, but she knew how to handle the customers, and I could teach her the rest; with just a little “tweaking”, she was going to be good. To start with, whether you are a male or female bartender, do not spend all of your time flirting with any one customer; here she was on only her second day behind the bar, and she already found the next true love of her life, or so *he* thought... and she was working it. As she leaned low to give the absolute best view of her ample cleavage, she gazed into his eyes and looked at him as if he was the only man in the room, softly offering sexy small talk; and completely ignoring the rest of the bar and the server staff trying to get their drinks for a very full dining room. Sandy actually thought that the more she offered this one customer, the more gratuities she would “earn”.

Lesson number one, that customer isn’t going anywhere. The more time you spend doing something else, like actually being a bartender, the more time the customer is going to stay... waiting for your return... they will stay longer and tip more. The servers that are getting drinks for their dining room customers are a large part of a bartender’s tips. The better their service to their customers, the better tips they will receive, and at the end of their shift, most servers tip their bartender a percentage of what they earn.

Lesson number two, the customer waiting for your attention will continue to wait, and usually will come back for more. He is on a mission to go out with you and he will become one of your most loyal regular customers. He will hangout on your bar, often for days or weeks, and flirt with you until he accomplishes his mission. If you work the entire bar and allow him to sit and wait, he will stay longer and drink more, and the larger tab will equate to a larger tip. A good professional bartender has been known to keep the customer hanging for years... and the customer still comes back for more.

Lesson number three, if, and when you decide to allow a customer the pleasure of your company on a personal level, away from the bar, you just lost a regular customer and the tips he was giving you. As a current boyfriend or girlfriend, they no longer feel like they *have* to tip you; and as an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend, they never will. Learn to keep your personal relationships apart from your ability to make a living. There will always be the exceptions, and with a little luck you may find the true love of your life while tending bar, but until then, think of all the tips you could lose.

Tip of the day: Bartending is a profession, not a dating service. When you start to date one of your regular customers, it's usually for a short term, and after the breakup, you lose the customer and his/her tip.

Hitting on the bartender

Most people think that female bartenders get hit on all the time and this is relatively true, however male bartenders get hit on just as much. Most of the time getting hit on as a bartender has a lot to do with the fact that we are seen as the center of attention and people know that if they can make themselves memorable it will probably result in getting our attention quicker when it's time for their next drink and maybe they'll also get a little extra splash of booze.

Alcohol also tends to make people say things they maybe wouldn't or shouldn't when sober. A bartender has heard it all a million times. I never even think twice about when someone hits on me at the bar... it has really become as common place as, "hi how are you?" Some people are more persistent than others and of course the people that really like to play the chase game of getting a woman's attention tend to put in much more effort than most, which can result in jewelry, flowers, candy, and other elaborate gifts being delivered to our work, in an attempt to get our attention. In the beginning I felt very weird accepting gifts from people trying to get my attention and would often return them to the giver; then I also realized that I was probably considered rude accepting a gift from a person I had no intentions of ever dating. Here in Orange County, so many of the people do things more for the "show" and attention, knowing that it will help how they look in other people's eyes... seems to be important to some.

Try to keep your significant other out of your place of business. They will usually have ulterior motives for coming into your bar, and it's not usually just to say hi. Your significant other has ownership rights and an attachment, and they really don't care about anything except marking their territory.

Tip of the day: This will have an adverse effect on your ability to do your job and make a living. Trust and integrity are critical components to your success and wellbeing; and is an integral part of any relationship, both professional and personal.

Awkward moments and relationships

Awkward moments should be avoided at any cost. Most regular customers love to go where "everyone knows their name"; but when regular customers walk into your bar, and they are with someone who you don't recognize; do not be so quick to acknowledge them. Who really knows what your regular customer has told his friends about how much time they spend in your bar? When in doubt... wait... and be patient, your regular customer will be the first one to let you know how he would like you to proceed.

What if... Your regular customer brings in their new or existing boss, and that person doesn't realize just how much time his employee, your customer, spends with you? Your customer maybe trying to impress his boss, his staff, a new business relationship? He brings his wife instead of his girlfriend... or vice versa? The woman or man on your customer's arm could be anyone... wife or husband... existing or new girlfriend... or a soon to be ex... when in doubt, let your customer guide you.

You are dating more than one person, and they both show up at your bar, (and nine times out of ten, they will wind up sitting next to each other). You have a regular customer, who is always coming in to see you... flirt with you, and "tip" you, and then you decide to start dating them. On the rare occasion that it turns into true love and marriage... congratulations, but if not, you just lost a "tipping", regular customer... permanently. Existing girlfriends and boyfriends do not tip their significant others; and if, and when you break up, they will not be back in will no longer be a regular customer.

Danny had been coming into my bar for a few months during happy hour, at least twice a week, and always with his girlfriend. It was the start of a busy Friday afternoon when he showed up alone. It didn't take long for him to spill his guts about how they were no longer a couple, he had been dumped, and I was more than happy to help get him through it; I had always considered him sexy, and someone that I may have wanted to get to know a little better.

The following weekend I "managed" to squeeze Danny into my social life, twice on Saturday and all Sunday afternoon; and it was even better than I had imagined it would be. Over the next few weeks, we spent a lot of my spare time in my bed... on my couch... in my bathroom... just about anytime and anywhere the mood hit us, and it hit often.

I was very satisfied with our very intense, physical relationship, until he came into *my* bar with a different woman on his arm. They were with a group of friends, most of whom I recognized, but Danny seemed very uncomfortable, and eventually he realized that he couldn't ignore me anymore. He brought his "date" up to the bar, and introduced me to his wife of six years, Julia. It had never occurred to me that after his last break up, that he might also have a wife hanging around... *who knew?*

I had so much that I wanted to say, but my smarter, better side took over and as Julia reached for my hand, my softer, little voice was thinking... hi, I'm Pam, I've been going down on your husband for about a month... *payback will be a bitch.*

James and Tito... Tito and James, sometimes I get so confused. I started dating both of them about the same time, and I really did have trouble keeping them separate. Tito was my little brown boy from Costa Rica, and James was my little brown man from Santa Ana; they were both so much alike and I had a great time, regardless of which one I was with.

Tito had gone home to Costa Rica for about a month, so it was only natural for me to spend a little more time with James. We were having an intimate cocktail in the bar area, the music was soft and sensuous, and my hand was having a very good time in James's lap; when I looked up to see the little brown face of Tito. James knew about Tito, but Tito knew nothing about James; so I was so appreciative when James whispered that he would see me at home and I spent the next couple of hours trying to console Tito.

I walked into my apartment to find a dozen red roses on my dining room table, with a trail of red rose petals leading to the bedroom. James knew what turned me on. I truly loved that man, but, eventually, he broke my heart and I haven't seen him since. Years later, Tito and I are still friends.

Tip of the day: Bottom line, significant others do not belong in your bar. Regardless of what you think, if your significant other is sitting on your bar, you will treat your regular customers differently, and it will affect the way you work your bar. do not make the mistake of confusing sex and relationships, they are not the same; you can have one without the other... and be very careful when you start dating one of your regular customers... you will usually lose a regular customer, and their tips, for a very short romantic experience.

“Bread & Water”

In all the years behind the bar, I never really cut anyone off because they were getting too drunk; but I knew my bar, my family, extremely well. As family, I would never embarrass them, but they all knew that when I place a bowl of soup and some bread in front of them, that it was time to stop drinking and start eating, and I usually would serve them water after that. I'm not exactly sure why they always did what I told them to do, but I like to think that they just knew that I cared enough about them to take care of them.

Every once in a while, I would ease up on their alcohol intake without them every realizing that they were being treated differently; I loved Hank, but every so often he would start to “power drink”, drinking faster than I could almost pour them. On those rare occasions, I would cut the amount of alcohol I would pour in half, and float just a little bit on the tip of the straw or the top of the drink; that way he would get the first sip of the drink as pure alcohol and never realize I “short poured” him; then I would do the next drink the same way. He would get two drinks, with the same amount of alcohol as one, but the second drink I would gracefully “comp”. Hank not only stayed sober, but he stayed longer, and he *thought* he was getting a free drink, which made him feel even more “*special*”, and he stayed out of trouble. I kept one of my regular customer’s safe and happy, the bar didn’t lose any money because I only charged him for what I poured; I just divided it into two drinks instead of one.

Tip of the day: A customer who has had too much to drink will quickly transform, and their personality will change, usually to rude or inconsiderate; and they will either get very loud or very quiet... pay attention.

“Wheels”

I had known Nick for about a year, a regular customer whom everyone loved, especially the topless dancers in the clubs that he frequented. He preferred to be called “wheels” and has been in a wheelchair for most of his adult life. It was not uncommon to see Nick wheel into the topless bar and have several dancers fighting for the opportunity to jump onto his lap and have him take them for a ride. He usually had no problem talking to people about his accident, but usually would end every conversation by blaming the stars.

One night, after feeding him many cocktails, he finally decided to tell me the truth. He was coming back from a very drunk weekend at what we called “the river”, several bars and casinos on the bank of the Colorado River; and in his infinite wisdom, he thought he could actually make the six-hour drive home without a problem. There was a full moon, clear skies, and not another car could be seen.

He found himself, flat on his back, lying in a ditch next to the side of the road. He could see out of the corner of his eye that his beautiful pickup truck didn't look quite so beautiful lying on its side, and there were heavenly stars everywhere, sparkling in the moon light. As the sun started to come up, he realized that what he thought were sparkling stars, were in fact dozens of empty beer cans surrounding the truck, with the moonlight causing them to sparkle. It didn't take a rocket scientist or the cops on the scene, to realize that it was the contents of these "stars" that Nick could thank for his "wheels".

Tip of the day: Nick was fortunate to have lived, but a little common sense as to drinking and driving would have saved his legs.

Manners

Listen up, we don't usually own the place, and we don't set the prices, so complaining to us isn't going to do anything for you or your check. A point of fact is that our jobs are worth a lot more than the extra couple bucks you might throw our way in that moment when you want to get something for less than retail. If you don't have any money, be wise about what you buy. Most bars have shot specials or discounted beers. If you only have twenty dollars to spend, you may want to just stay home with a six-pack of your favorite beer, rather than spend half that for one at a bar. If you have some scratch, TIP! It's how the people serving you eat and pay their rent. If you don't have any money, be wise about what you buy. Most bars have shot specials or discounted beer, so if you only have a twenty in your pocket, spend it wisely. Obviously if the service sucks, don't tip a lot; however, if your drink is the way you like it, and you're served in a timely manner by a polite staff member, then be gratuitous, it goes a long way. Regardless of how much or how little money you have.

Always say please and thank you. It's just good manners. What many people may not know, is that servers spend about ninety percent of their night complaining about rude and demanding customers, and your face *will* be remembered the next time you come in.

Tip of the day: Tip bad and be rude the first time out, and you may never get good service again; tip well and be polite, and you'll be treated like a king or queen for life by the staff and management

On the flip side

I entered a very well known, popular sports bar a little after 12. I only had time for one glass of wine before I had to run home to babysit my granddaughter, so I laid a twenty on the bar when the bartender dropped off my drink. It was a seven-dollar tab and the bartender placed my change in front of me... two fives and three dollar bills. As I finished my drink, I pushed the three dollars to the bartender and pocketed the two fives.

The bartender pushed the three, dollar bills back to me, and said "didn't I give you a five?" "Actually, you gave me two fives"; and he stood there, waiting for *his* five-dollar tip. I pushed the three dollars back towards him and told him he wasn't pretty enough. I do try to make a conscious effort to take care of my bartenders... all of them. If I had two drinks, I would have left six, three drinks and he might have gotten either nine or ten, but I will not support rude, arrogant behavior. In this instance, I felt a 43% tip for one drink, only rude conversation, was adequate and with a simple thank you, I would have remained a customer; but with the attitude of this particular bartender, that is no longer an option.

Tip of the day: Being a bartender doesn't give you the right to consider yourself "entitled". there are entire cultures that believe that tipping is not permitted. there are also those that believe that a tip should be earned; not assumed; and that the tip is all about the level of service that is received.

Wine bottle presentation

There is one formality that consistently confounds wine newbies, and that's the bottle presentation. After a bartender or server takes a wine order, it's typical to return to the table with a bottle of wine in hand to "present" it to the customer before they uncork and pour it. But what is this practice meant to accomplish, and what should the patron do when a bottle is put in front of them?

Usually, there are two different scenarios when you might be presented wine, each with a unique purpose. For finer dining establishments, when ordering wines by the glass, the presentation process is composed of a bartender or server bringing over the bottle and pouring a small amount of wine in your glass. When ordering by the glass, it may be the policy of the restaurant for it to be tasted first, what they're really asking is, 'Do you like this wine?' It is a common policy to offer customers a small taste of these wines before filling their glasses. Very often, a customer will order a glass of a wine they have never tried before, but by offering it in this way, people don't have to drink something that they don't care for. In this instance, the bottle is being brought to the table so you can identify the wine and make an informed decision on whether you'd like the full glass or would prefer to try something else.

When ordering wine by the bottle, the procedure is a little different. A bartender or server may present bottles so that diners can simply confirm it's the one they ordered; and if they ordered a single-vineyard and they also carry the entry-level wine, you want to make sure that they're getting the correct one; especially if it's something that's more expensive. If a particular vintage is good, the customer should be sure that the establishment didn't change vintages and serve an inferior one. It is more common than not to serve a bottle of wine that will have a different vintage year than what is on the wine list.

Inventory changes occur far more often than reprinting the wine menu; and often, management was never told that the wine delivered to them was *NOT* the same wine that they ordered. This is a common issue but rarely is it ever intentional. Typically, the confusion comes from menus that aren't updated, wine salesmen that aren't informed about vintage availability, or simple human error.

Sommers will also pour tastes of wines by the bottle, but in this case — unlike for wines by the glass — they're doing so to ensure that the wine is free of faults. Since the bottle is already open in this case, if you don't like the wine you bought but it's not corked, it's up to the restaurant to decide how to handle the situation.

Wine presentations will look different depending on what restaurant you're in, the basic printed policy of the establishment, and the knowledge of the professionals on staff. While establishments with extensive wine lists or fine-dining allure may take wine presentation seriously, other spots may speed through the process or not partake at all. At more casual restaurants, servers may simply open your bottle behind the bar for added ease.

Tip of the day: Bottle presentation is all about the “show”. the more formal the atmosphere, the more expensive the menu... the bigger the “show”. Add a trained sommelier to the mix and it can get crazy.

Awkward moments

Awkward moments should be avoided at any cost. Most regular customers love to go where “everyone knows their name”; but when regular customers walk into your bar, and they are with someone you do not recognize; do not be so quick to acknowledge them. Who really knows what your regular customer has told his companion about how much time they spend in your bar? When in doubt... wait... and be patient, your regular customer will be the first one to let you know how he would like you to proceed.

What if...

Your regular customer brings in their new or existing boss, and that person doesn't realize just how much time his employee, your customer, spends with you? Your customer is trying to impress his boss, his staff, a new business relationship? He brings his wife instead of his girlfriend... or vice versa? The woman or man on your customer's arm could be anyone... wife or husband... existing or new girlfriend... or a soon to be ex... when in doubt, let your customer guide you.

You are dating more than one person, and they both show up at your bar, (and nine times out of ten, they will wind up sitting next to each other). You have a regular customer, who is always coming in to see you... flirt with you, and *"tip"* you, and then you decide to start dating. On the rare occasion that it turns into true love and marriage... congratulations, but if not, you just lost a *"tipping"*, regular customer... permanently. Existing girlfriends and boyfriends do not tip their significant others; and if and when you break up, they will not be back in will no longer be a regular customer.

Tip of the day: Regardless of what you think, if your significant other is sitting on your bar, you will treat your regular customers differently, and it will affect the way you work your bar. do not make the mistake of confusing sex and relationships, they are not the same; you can have one without the other.