

A woman with long, wavy red hair is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is holding a large glass filled with a light-colored beverage, ice, and a lime wedge. A red straw is in the glass. The background is a bar with various bottles of alcohol, including several labeled 'VEDKA', and red and white striped awnings.

Knowledge & Experience

How to Become a Better Bartender

Joseph Palmese

How to Become a Better Bartender

Lesson 4

Knowledge is always a good thing, knowing what to do and how to do it will always be a plus, it is also something that can be taught. Books, recipes, on-site training are just some of the options available; if a bartender truly wants to learn more about their profession, the tools are readily available. Yes, it's like going back to school, but in real life, one never really stops learning. Learning how to be consistent, using the right glass for the right cocktail, making sure the cocktail has the right balance of flavors, and making sure the correct size pour spouts are used on the correct bottles; these are just a few of the required elements of a bartender's knowledge. Knowledge is king... take the time to listen and learn:

- Know the basics of how to make a drink
- Know the different Wine – Beer – Mixed Drinks that are offered
- Point of Sale and Inventory Controls
- What is your Pouring Cost (PC)
- Know your customers

Experience is definitely important, but experience that hasn't been used to better your skills and performance, and to achieve more with what you have available, is irrelevant... basically a waste of time and energy. Experience should be considered as what you have actually accomplished with your accumulated knowledge, not in the number of years it took you to get there.

Experience is all about the time spent behind the bar and the job responsibilities you master; and only with the diversity of multiple responsibilities can you achieve an experience level that can teach a good bartender how to react to multiple situations. Knowing what your cocktail server's responsibilities are, your bar back's, your manager's, the hostess, the expeditor delivering a food order... everyone on staff is responsible for exceeding a customer's expectations. *The more a bartender is aware of his surroundings, the easier this becomes.* Experience... only time and some common sense can help:

How to Become a Better Bartender

- Economy of Motion
- Keeping a Clean Bar
- Too much to drink – Dealing with drunks
- Keeping the bar stocked – including garnish and mixes
- How to handle the customers you don't like and the customers that you do like
- How to handle attitude and bar fights
- How to handle the “non-tippers” and
- Working under pressure

Tip of the day: It is physically impossible to learn every drink, especially when the same drink is made differently by every bartender, and often it's different in every city. It is far more important to know how to make the drink for *your* customer, the way *they* like it, and the way management would expect you to pour it.

Know your customers

Kathleen, the owner of the bar, had no interest in teaching me how to make drinks... as she pointed out to me on several occasions; I already proved that I knew how to “fake” making drinks, as was evidenced during my initial interview. She was more interested in teaching me about the customers in her club. *She had them broken down into four categories.*

The *regulars*, whom she allowed to enjoy special considerations, the *tourists*, that could be used for interaction with everyone in the bar; the *ladies*, found usually in small groups, looking to have some fun; and hopefully “score” some of those special considerations, and the *men* trying to “score” the ladies.

Kathleen spent a lot of time teaching me about *her* customers. She was a firm believer in “*working*” the bar, and she informed me that I had been hired more for my personality, because I could talk my ass off with perfect strangers, and not for my limited bartending skills. Kathleen taught me how to mix and match the different groups of people to keep them all entertained... and coming back for more. She also taught me how important it was to keep the core group of regular customers *and* the ladies happy. The regulars would keep the tourist trade entertained, and the ladies... well the men will *always* follow the ladies.

How to Become a Better Bartender

Tip of the day: Experience, if you don't have it, listen and learn from those that do. On the rare occasion that someone with years of experience is willing and able to teach you... pay attention.

A mentor and true professional

From my first day behind the bar, my favorite server at the bar was Beth. She immediately took me under her wing and started to share with me everything she thought I would need to know. From the correct order that drinks should be called out to the bartender and the way I picked up the liquor bottles, to the correct way of using an ice scoop to put ice in the glasses; (never, ever dip a glass into the ice bin, it's *glass* and will eventually chip, leaving glass shards in the ice that could potentially find their way into someone's drink).

During the slow periods in the bar, my training became more intense, and I was soaking it all in. After Beth decided that my basic skills were "adequate", we started to work on my memory, slowly at first, just a few drinks at a time. Beth would pick a table and ask me to make the drinks, and after a while, she would just call out the table number; "table 14", and I would make the drinks... or it would be "table 8 no scotch", or "table 19 no vodka", or just "tables 8, 10 and 12".

During each one of my shifts, she would also give me hints on how to handle the difficult customers and how to better serve the good ones. She even bought me several joke books to study, so that I would be able to come up with some quick one-liners to help keep the customers entertained without spending too much time in the attempt. She was slow and methodical with my training, and it wasn't long before all the servers were ordering their drinks the same way. By the time she decided that I had "*graduated*", I was able to remember every drink, at all twenty-four tables, while keeping track of the customers that left and the customers that took their place. To keep me on my toes, once a night, I was asked to recite every drink, for every customer, at the bar and all of the tables... and Beth would tolerate no mistakes.

How to Become a Better Bartender

There are only four basic reasons to sit at a bar; first and to some, the most important, you're thirsty and need a drink... second, the bartender is good looking... third, is the bartender's *personality*... and fourth is the bartender's abilities; this included *bar knowledge* and *bar presence*. Not necessarily in that order, but a great personality often allow a customer to overlook other inadequacies.

I have never considered myself "good looking" and I have no control of the customers that just wanted a drink, so I needed to focus on the areas that I *could actually control... personality and my abilities*.

Before every shift, I would spend an hour "studying" the Old Mr. Boston bar book, (the bartender's bible at the time). When I first started, it was my constant companion, not that it was such an interesting read, because it wasn't, but I thought it would be important to remember the different nuances of some of the more popular drinks. I felt that the more I knew, the easier it would be to get a little creative and keep the customers a little excited about their choices. Hard core beer drinkers rarely drank anything but beer; they may get a little adventurous with the IPA flavor of the month, but it was still beer. Alcoholics have a tendency to stay with what they know, but everyone else, especially the ladies, look forward to a little variety.

When reading "Old Mr. Boston" got a little too much for me, I would review the joke books that Beth had purchased, and read them from cover to cover, then back again, to help me memorize the quick one liners. With the constant assistance and supervision of Beth, I was able to work on my memory skills, drink knowledge, the timing of the quick one line jokes, and overall, gave the "*perception*" of being a good bartender.

How to Become a Better Bartender

Trish, a waitress from a restaurant down the street, would stop by before every shift, for a quick shot of tequila. She was tiny, but could out drink any sailor I had ever met. She once talked me into trying a “Mexican Flag” before starting my own shift..... Green Chartreuse, 151 Rum and Grenadine, layered in a pony glass. Talk about being fast, two of those and my hands were flying, and so were the drinks. I got into the habit of having a couple of these cocktails before I would start my shift, (just to get my heart pumping). That is, until all of my waitresses convinced me to stop drinking them... yes I was fast, very fast, but apparently, I was also, very, very sloppy, and the girls got tired of cleaning up *my* mess.

Tip of the day: Pay attention. knowledge is invaluable, know where to find it, absorb it, and you can never have too much of it.

Pouring Cost, (PC)

A bartender’s dilemma, over pour to keep a customer happy.... under pour, (also known as a “short” pour), to keep the owner happy. A pouring cost of between eighteen and twenty-four percent will normally keep the owner satisfied, anything over that, and they’ll think that the bartender is either giving away too much alcohol, or they’re stealing. Anything less than that and the customers are being taken advantage of.

Pouring Cost is a science, using the right glass, with the right amount of alcohol; and is all about the profitability of the operation, but should *never* be used to rip off a customer or the bar. There are several key components that help a bartender maintain a consistent “pour”.

Using the right glass for the right cocktail is extremely important. A large pint size goblet is used primarily for a pint of beer, not a scotch and water. A bartender would have to pour two to three ounces of alcohol before a customer would be able to taste it in a larger glass; pouring a “double” for the price of a “single”... *really?*

How to Become a Better Bartender

Some common mistakes also include using a twelve ounce “bucket” glass instead of an eight ounce “rocks” glass, or a pint glass for a margarita instead of a margarita glass; or pouring a “shot” in a rocks glass instead of a shot glass. Consistently using the wrong glass size will consistently cause over pouring and drastically cut into the company’s profitability.

Another misuse of a bartender’s tools is the common pour spout. There is a tendency to think that all pour spouts are created equal, but they are not. They usually come in four sizes and a bartender using a four “count” would have a different result for each size. The use of plastic pour spouts has made it difficult but not impossible to pour correctly. The smaller size is usually appropriate and allows a bartender to stay consistent and give a “show” of over pouring. (The larger size pour spouts should *only* be used for mixes and on the rare occasion, with an *extremely* busy “service bar” that pours three times the normal volume).

The larger pour spouts will almost always result in over pouring and getting creative with different size pour spouts for different liquors will destroy any hope of consistency between the different bartenders. Although most establishments rely on a bar back to pull all of the pour spouts to clean them, hopefully at least once a week, it would be extremely helpful if they put the pour spouts back on the right bottles when they are done.

Tip of the day: The actual count is directly proportionate and opposite to the size of the pour spout. a four count is used with the smallest size and a one count is used with the largest; and you need to keep your rhythm and count consistent. This knowledge keeps the bar profitable... and you employed. A suggestion would be to use just one size to stay consistent. A four-count should be an ounce... so once again... practice.

Pay attention to your surroundings

The “Stadium” was a nice bar and restaurant across the street from Angel Stadium. It had just been sold to an investment firm and I was asked to give my “professional” opinion about the qualifications of the current management team. I was starting to establish a reputation for having more to offer than just being a “good looking face” behind the bar, and not being shy; apparently... I had no filter and spoke what I felt.

How to Become a Better Bartender

The lounge area was dominated by a large rectangular bar, in the middle of the room. It had three bartender stations and ample liquor storage, both on the center island behind the bar and in the overhead shelves above each well. After meeting with both the general manager and his bar manager, I had only three questions. How much liquor is stocked behind the bar? What is your pouring cost? And are there any inventory controls in place? Reasonable questions that every bar manager should know, and every general manager should check; at least monthly if not more often.

After the general manager voiced his opinion on how ridiculous that was, the bar manager jumped in to say something derogatory about my family background and that no one has the ability to have that information available at a moment's notice. They are going to need to take a complete inventory to get my answers... maybe I should check back in a couple of days?

I needed to make a point, so, with the new owner's permission, I spent five minutes walking behind the bar, mentally taking note of how many liquor bottles there were; and then another five minutes walking around the bar, taking note of how many bottles were stored on the open shelves overhead. I then mentally calculated the number of bottles, times the average cost of one bottle of liquor, (a number I received from the liquor salesman on the account) and came up with 232 bottles at a total cost of \$2,860.

I also took note of the different pour spouts being utilized, a combination of metal and plastic, with some of the open liquor bottles with none; making it physically impossible to consistently pour the same amount of alcohol each time you pick up a bottle. *The fruit flies gracefully floating above the open, stale, garnish trays were also a nice touch.*

How to Become a Better Bartender

I wasn't there to be nice, and after they took note of my initial observations and realized that after only ten minutes, my inventory count was only off by two bottles, the "bar manager" took his leave; and I agreed to help out the general manager until he found a replacement. It only took a weekend to clean the place; and a clean and *dry bar* will usually cure the fruit fly issue. I replaced all of the garnish with fresh ingredients and explained to the bartenders on staff how important the correct pour spouts were to maintain a consistent pouring cost. A couple of weeks later, the day bartender was put in charge of maintaining the PAR inventory behind the bar, and the general manager took on additional staffing responsibilities... *they never had to replace the "bar manager"*.

Consistency behind the bar is a result of everyone being on the "*same page*". With just a little training and a common sense approach, the end result was an improvement in pouring cost, reduced labor cost, and increased profitability.

Tip of the day: Take pride in yourself and your ability to do the job. the lack of knowledge cost this bar manager his job. it had become obvious that he didn't care about himself... his customers... or the bar.

Know your bar and your other bartender

The actual bar was set up with two bartending stations and chairs for ten; it was small, but very functional. We had a good, experienced staff of servers on the floor with Joe P behind the bar at night, while I was primarily working the day shift. We made a great team and would often swap shifts to keep from getting bored. Joe P was left-handed and his "well" setup was exactly the opposite of mine, as my "well" was set up for my right-handed pour. At the end of my day shift, I would quickly change the "well" to suit Joe P and informed my bar patrons that it was time to "rape" the bar. It was our way of closing out all open bar tabs so that the night bartender didn't reap the benefits of the day bartender's work, (*we were friends, but our tips were our livelihood*).

How to Become a Better Bartender

Tip of the day: In today's world, sharing gratuities (tips) is not only acceptable, but preferred. the average service levels will be better and although you may think that you have that special customer that tips you well... the other bartenders you work with have those as well.

As I mentioned, Joe P and I worked well together, our personalities, skills and work ethic were similar, and after all, he had been my mentor. We were both fast... I was *very* fast and young enough to think that speed was important... while Joe P was *"only as fast as he had to be," obviously, I still had a lot to learn.*

Joe was about to escalate my training. He had a very good understanding of the skills I had been able to learn while at my last job, but now I needed to learn *his* way. As the day bartender, I was now responsible for the bar's cleanliness, the cutting of all the fruit required for the garnish of each drink, and the preparation for all bar mixes; we made all of them using formulas that Joe P had created. The Bloody Mary Mix, Margarita Mix, custom bitters and special garnishes, were all pre-made before starting my shift.

At the end of each shift, I was also responsible for restocking the bar and making sure Joe's "well" was set up and ready to go the moment he stepped behind the bar... as I mentioned... I was right-handed, he was a lefty, and all of the bottles of liquor in the well had to be in the right place for each of us. Originally, I thought it a bit much, but then I realized that Joe P did the same restocking and set up for me when he ended his shift. When I came in, in the morning, *my bar* was fully stocked and ready to go.

A part of my escalated training with Joe was our pride in the bar, keeping it neat and clean. Once a week, every Saturday morning, Joe and I would ask one of our busboys to come in with us both and help clean the bar, on our dime. Management was too cheap, so Joe and I paid them out of our own pocket; and it was worth every penny. When we started the week, our bar was spotless, every liquor bottle was wiped down and lined up, with the labels facing front; all the glasses sitting on the back bar were cleaned and polished, the stainless steel sinks and refrigeration were scrubbed cleaned and everything was in its right place. Even the wooden slats that we worked on were taken outside and steam cleaned.

How to Become a Better Bartender

It was Joe's wish, as well as my own; that I become a "*Professional Bartender*", not just someone going to school or killing time until they figured out what their real career was going to be. Joe, and his peer group, the "*Professional Bartenders*" in the area, needed me to step it up a notch, quickly... *so that I would fit in.*

Tip of the day: Knowledge and experience: being aware of our surroundings, staying focused, and knowing each other's personality and strengths helped, allowed us to work together as a team, and to be more productive and proficient. but the primary focus was having the bar clean and ready. keeping the bar fully stocked and the space ready for work.

That ten percent that you don't want to talk to

As good as you are, and as good as your regular customers usually are, there will always be about 10% of the customers sitting on your bar you may find a little annoying, or a down-right pain in the ass. Not liking a customer is not a good enough reason to ignore them; and face it; they probably don't like you either.

The real problem is when your entire bar is filled with that 10%. None of your regulars came in, your bar is filled, and you are probably hating life. So what, you get paid to be the bartender, so suck it up. Of course, you could also have some fun by just being *nice*.

You look over at Johnny, and with a smile on your face, you tell him that he is a real pain in your ass; but that he's in luck, because Pete, sitting to his right, is also a pain in the ass. You two should get along famously, Johnny meet Pete, Pete meet Johnny, now you can both talk about what an asshole I really am... *but you keep smiling.* As Johnny and Pete become close personal best friends, you add a couple more of those to the mix... *but you keep smiling.*

Before you know it, your entire bar is talking to each other and having a good time... so what if it's at your expense. They will stay longer, tip better, and because they are all leaving you alone and you've been honest with them all... you'll feel better. The fact that you kept smiling is the key, it really doesn't matter what you tell your customers if you keep smiling.

How to Become a Better Bartender

What do you do when you have a customer on your bar that you really don't like? It's really quite simple, just be honest... *and smile*. Tell him what you really think of him, *and smile*. Tell him that deep down, even he knows that he's a real asshole, *and smile*. Tell him how inconsiderate he is... *and smile*. You can tell him almost anything, just smile when you tell him. The customer will only have a few options at that point; regardless of how he feels about what you said. He can take offense and leave, or he can look at your smiling face and decide that you are only kidding. Even if he is very sure that you aren't, if he wants to stay at the bar, he'll convince himself that you really didn't mean it.

Tip of the day: Introduce everyone on your bar to everyone on your bar, friends and enemies alike; it will keep the bar interesting and entertained... but always smile.

A visit to the jungle

One of the main bartenders was a guy they called Jungle, and he was amazing at his craft, very fast and one of the top "ringers" on the nightclub side, he consistently outpoured everyone else working. Jungle was also a lady's man. He had a harem of women that always wanted him, and most of them got their chance. Jungle had sandy blonde curly hair and he was a very familiar face at the local gym. Being well-built and having movie star looks... most of the girls coming into the bar wanted to get to know him better.

Jungle was tending bar on a Thursday, with two bar-backs, when a couple started acting strange in front of Jungle's well. The guy was about six-four, two hundred fifty pounds, and was pretty buff; and was clearly on steroids. Apparently, Jungle had fucked his girlfriend, and the guy just found out. The customer reached across the bar with both hands; grabbing Jungle's shirt, as he tried to pull Jungle over the bar so he could administer a serious ass-whooping. BIG MISTAKE! Jungle grabbed the guy's arms by his wrists and put his foot on the edge of the cooler to brace himself. The two bar backs noticed the commotion and reacted immediately; instantly, all three of them were pulling the guy over the bar top.

How to Become a Better Bartender

His girl started screaming, "*Stop! What are you doing, Josh? Nothing happened! We only had lunch!*" Or some other sort of lame bullshit to cover up the fact that she had sex with Jungle... like the two-dollar-cheating-whore that she was. Once Josh was pulled across the bar, all three of them threw him to the ground; and he hit the floor with a very loud thud. Liquor bottles were spilled out of the speed racks and breaking on the floor as they hit. Glass, fruit, napkins, and ashtrays went flying everywhere.

Josh was on the ground covering up like a UFC fighter that had just had his bell rung and was about to have the fight stopped because he was being beaten so badly and was unable to defend himself; except, there's no referee in this fight that could save his ass. While he was lying on the floor, all three employees started kicking the living shit out of him. He was beat to a pulp and laid there unconscious behind the bar. They finally stopped the onslaught of punches and kicks when they noticed that the guy wasn't moving. When security showed up, they lifted the guy up and dragged him out from behind the bar. They tried to wake him but he was unresponsive, so they took him outside and deposited him on the top steps; I was both shocked and compelled by the event; and I wanted to see if they killed the poor bastard.

The Police Officers that showed up called the paramedics and they arrived within minutes. The officers' first question was, "What happened?" The head of security, without flinching or even missing a beat, said, "Reports from inside security and our bar manager claim this guy tried robbing the back bar. He put up a pretty good fight too. Our bartender got punched in the jaw;" a misguided punch from one of the bar-backs, no doubt. The customer Josh was treated for a concussion, four broken bones in his face, a broken arm, and several lacerations on his back and sides from landing on all the broken glass. His medical bills totaled around a hundred thousand, and he went to trial for damages which the bar sued for, for product loss and disruption of business... another five thousand.

How to Become a Better Bartender

Tip of the day: An experienced bartender should never have allowed the situation to get that out of control. The customer spent the next two years in jail for trying to rob the bar ... and for the couple of grams of coke in his possession, a controlled substance. He apparently had been a little “coked” up, which led to his bad decision over the Jungle hopping his girlfriend; but Jungle was extremely lucky that he didn’t wind up joining him in jail, or at the very least, losing his job.

On Fire!!!

Working at Soma there were opportunities, like in all bars, to woo the crowd, often doing something off the wall and crazy. One Saturday night, I decided to start pushing hot peach pie shots. It was really cold out and this shot will warm you through-and-through. The recipe I liked to pour at the time included a float of 151 Rum, and then I’d light it on fire. I’d let it burn until the flame went out and suck the contents out of the shot glass with a straw.

I had served five or six rounds of these shots and I had actually had a few, which probably didn’t help my judgment. I had a large group of ladies in front of my bar, dressed in very nice clothes and adornments that resembled that of a bachelorette party. I was attempting to ring the most money in booze sales, have the most fun, and get paid quite handsomely to do it all. There were five girls in the group, I remember because of the way I lined the shots up... three in front and two in the back. I lit all five and spread them out. One of the girls was drunk and obviously not thinking at all when she convinced the whole group into blowing out the flames on the shots! Normally I’d be fleeing for my life but, nope, been drinking. “Yeah!” I said, “Why not?!” Four of the five ladies blew out their shots and burning booze from the fifth landed on my shirt and the bar top.

I grabbed a couple of wet towels and was splashing water everywhere, extinguishing the fire on the bar, but my shirt was still on fire, so I grabbed the towel off my hip, plunged it into plain water and doused the flame. I was very lucky and what was left of my shirt had three significant holes burned in it. That’s how I tended bar for the rest of the night, but no one seemed to notice. Two very important lessons came from this, one, don’t ever serve another flamed drink, and two, always carry a back-up shirt when bartending.

How to Become a Better Bartender

Another “hot” moment... while working the bar called Memorabilia, I was enamored by this blonde with huge breasts. She was wearing this white top that had little fuzzy strings that stuck out all over it. She was a smoker and about to light up so I pulled the Tom Cruise cocktail trick of lighting a match and throwing the whole matchbook down on the bar with the lit match sticking up, sliding it toward her so she could pick it up and light her cigarette. It went terribly wrong! She leaned in just as the matchbook reached her and the little fuzzy strings of her shirt caught on fire! I was less than two feet away and quickly ran over to her and started patting the flames out on her chest! It seemed as though I was just openly groping her. Apparently... she liked it, and never noticed that I had set her on fire.

The following weekend she came in, saying her favorite shirt had been ruined somehow by the dryer. I told her the truth about how it went down and that she was pretty drunk and hadn't notice. She said she just thought I liked her tits a lot. We both laughed, and I bought her a couple drinks to apologize...

Tip of the day: Knowledge and experience would teach what not to do behind the bar, but using a little common sense helps... these instances were just stupid and could have resulted in a major medical issue and a financial disaster.

Know your beer glass

Beer is the only beverage on earth that naturally retains a foam head. Pouring the perfect pint requires careful attention to the head of your beer and every beer will retain its head differently. Head, foam, or whatever you'd like to call it is actually quite scientific. The key to the beer's ability to generate foam and retain carbonation lies in the ingredients. Barley, hops, wheat, and many other things naturally found in nature contain a certain type of protein that is highly *hydrophobic*. That means that it repels water (the #1 ingredient in beer). These proteins grab onto the CO₂ bubbles (or N₂ in the case of a nitrogen beer) and form a coating around them. As the bubbles ride to the top of the glass, they cling together generating a mass of foam on the top of your beer.

How to Become a Better Bartender

The foam of your beer will greatly affect its mouthfeel. That is, as the name suggests, how the beer feels as you drink it. Beers can range from highly effervescent in the case of many sours, or soft and creamy like a stout. The head of your beer also greatly helps to display a beer's aroma and prevents the carbonation from escaping and becoming flat.

Every style of beer will generate a different head. You should always start with a [beer-clean glassware](#) and try to use the [right style of glass](#) whenever possible. Generally, you should try to pour your beer to have a half-inch to inch head. A good rule of thumb is to hold your glass at 45° as you pour the first half, then hold it upright and pour the rest down the center.

It's happened to everyone whether you noticed or not. Unfortunately, dirty glassware at bars is a common occurrence. Dirty glassware can affect the flavors of your beer and very often you won't be able to tell if a glass is dirty or contaminated just by looking at it. There are a few tell-tale signs of a dirty glass that you should be on the lookout for; impurities on glassware such as detergent, food, and grease are the most common. These things can all introduce unintended flavors in your beer. The CO₂ bubbles latch on to these impurities and if you see bubbles like this on the side of your glass don't be afraid to ask for a new one.

With the different styles of beer, like Pilsners, Hefeweizens, or Belgian Wits, a thick bone-white head is preferred. To achieve this, pour the majority of the beer very hard to create an initial head of about 2 inches and let it settle to become denser before topping off. With a beer like a Porter or a Stout, the goal is to always retain a head throughout the entire beer so try only pouring half of the beer at first, pouring the rest later to create new foam (this can also help you maintain a preferred temperature). With any nitrogen-carbed beer the goal is to 'pour hard' which helps to generate as much foam and aroma as possible.

Lacing and Head Retention

How to Become a Better Bartender

Dirty glassware can also contribute to poor lacing (foam left on the side of your glass) and bad head retention. This happens for the same reason rubbing your nose and sticking it in your beer makes the head dissipate. Contaminates in beer effect the surface tension of these CO₂ bubbles, causing them to burst more easily. This is bad because the head of your beer improves mouthfeel and helps lock in carbonation and aroma.

How to care for the Glassware

If you're unsure if your glasses are clean enough, dip them in a little bit of water. If the water falls off in sheets that's a good sign. If the water easily beads up into droplets, then it's probably too dirty for a good beer. The best way to keep glassware clean is to only use your beer glasses for drinking beer. When finished, immediately rinse them with hot water and avoid soap and detergent. Paper towels and drying cloths can also leave behind fuzz and contaminates so it's best to air-dry. There are a seemingly endless array of beer vessels to choose from. The right glass can improve the way you smell, see, taste, and pour different styles of beer. While there are several types of glassware that may compliment each style of beer, we think there are some glass/beer combinations that work perfectly.

Tall Tulip Glass

A fun beer should be served in a fun glass. An unfiltered wheat ale is traditionally served in a weizen glass, but we think this tall tulip is a slightly better choice for a few reasons. Seeing and smelling this beer flaunts every detail that makes it so great. It is created using real blueberries and no added flavors. The tall shape of this tulip prevents the sediment from sinking to the bottom and the wide surface area shows off the natural deep purple color and strong aromatics that some people have compared to blueberry muffins.

The "Pint" Glass

How to Become a Better Bartender

This will vary based on the country you are in, but here are the two most popular. In the United States, a beer that is advertised and poured as a pint, is going to be served in a 16-ounce glass. In the United Kingdom, the same beer is going to be poured in a 20-ounce glass; this is also known as an “English Pint”.

Weizen Glass

A Hoppy Wheat Ale is an interesting and complex brew. At first it hits you like an IPA with a blast of hops on the front. The finish is something more like what you'd expect from an American Wheat Ale with a mild yeast character. A Weizen glass is perfect for this. Often confused with the pilsner glass, the weizen has curved sides which help to keep aroma in and promotes a thicker head. The elongated shape helps to show off this unfiltered ale and prevents the sediment from sinking to the bottom. Pour this beer a little harder than you think you should; as this will help to release the citrus and hop aromas and promote a thick and creamy head.

Stemmed Pilsner Glass

An English-style porter is silky and decadent; and has a roasty aroma with hints of chocolate and coffee. Getting a nose full of this beer is just as important as getting a mouth full. With a stemmed pilsner glass the wide surface area displays the dark color perfectly. The rounded sides keep in the aroma like a snifter would, while the lip helps to retain a fluffy head. Try pouring only half of the beer at first. This will help to prevent the head from totally dissipating, plus the extra air space is great for retaining aroma.

IPA Glass

For a while the only choices that made sense for an IPA were a basic shaker pint or a snifter for some double and triple IPAs with a high ABVs. That all changed with the introduction of a IPA glass. The varying widths of this glass helps to release the citrus and pine aromas from the bottom. The rounded lip retains those aromas and promotes a fluffy head. The wide mouth and thin sidewalls of the rim compliment this beer perfectly.

A Nonic Pint

How to Become a Better Bartender

A nonic pint, AKA an English pub glass is an ideal choice for an Irish-style red ale. Not too sweet, not too malty, not too thick; this beer is very versatile. The wide and straight shape is perfect for this beer's caramel colored head and cognac color. The bulge at the top of this glass is primarily there for grip and stacking but also provides some aeration to release more of the toffee aromas on this ale.

Tip of the day: Don't freak out if you can't keep it up... remember, it's science. based on the actual ingredients of the beer, it may be physically impossible to give it a head.

Know your wine glasses

Wine glasses are unusual in that their sections are designed more for the smelling of the wine than the tasting. There are several things that a sommelier and/or professional bartender considers important. First and foremost is the size of the wine glass. Here is a list of the most popular glassware used for wine varieties:

- Red Wine Style (will be a little larger than a White Wine glass).
- Burgundy (more luxurious and considerably larger than a regular style Red Wine glass)
- White Wine Style
- Champagne Flute
- Champagne Tulip
- Sherry Glass
- Café Style (a shorter version of the White Wine Style)

The Rim

Wine glasses are considerably more fragile at the lip. More practical glasses will often feature a thicker, sturdier rolled rim that is less likely to break. Deluxe glassware will have a thinner cut rim that can feel amazingly sheer and delicate, but is also the reason they are easier to break.

The Headspace

How to Become a Better Bartender

Just below the Rim, this part of the wine glass stays empty for basically two reasons. One is to allow the wine to be vigorously swirled without spilling. This will increase the surface area and its rate of evaporation, and second, to retain and concentrate the resulting aroma compounds.

The Bowl

As a general rule; wine glasses will feature large bowls that will narrow at the top at the top of the glass. This will help concentrate the wine's aroma. The most versatile are widest near the bottom and have a total capacity of roughly ten to twelve ounces.

The Wine

Wine glasses are designed to generally hold between five and six ounces of wine and should not be filled more than halfway up the glass, or above the widest point of the bowl. This will maximize the impact of the wine's aroma. A ten to twelve ounce wine glass would be ideal for this.

The Stem

The stem of a wine glass serves as a handle and is designed to keep a customer's fingers off the bowl of the glass. Body heat is easily transferred from your hands to the wine, and the wine's flavor changes greatly with even small shifts in temperature. The stems should comfortably accommodate the width of a hand at the knuckles.

The Base

Honestly... you will eventually have to put the glass down.

Tip of the day: There will be managers, bartenders and customers that have sworn that the shape of the glass is irrelevant, and it has nothing to do with the wines flavor profile. There will also be just as many people that actually like the ritual of swirling the wine to enhance the flavor, while appreciating the wine's aroma. do not be surprised if the wine ordered by the patron that enjoys a good glass of wine... that is served in the wrong glass ... is returned to you to repour.