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According to Adams Beverage Report, the American populace is drinking more now than ever, but what we’re drinking is not the hooch of yore. No ripple, not well gin and forget Schlitz. As we become a culture more and more acutely aware of things gastronomic, so too are we becoming a culture of savvy drinkers. Add to this global awareness, the Green Revolution, if you will. It has caused us to become a people who care more and more about what we put into our bodies. As a result of this, the premium and super-premium spirits categories have seen incredible growth in recent years, as have craft beers and small production sake, an amazing global palette of wines, and, of course, the venerable cocktail.

No restaurant or bar in this great nation can afford to be without a unique and exciting beverage program. No spirit brand can be without specialty cocktails, from-the-trenches input or an educated sales team. No distributor or importer can operate without a force of highly knowledgeable, passionate individuals on the streets.

Our goal in writing this book is to provide the knowledge to help the people drink better, to be discerning and seek out the best of the best.

Cheers,

The Tippling Bros.
Tad Carducci & Paul Tanguay

P.S. The Classic & Vintage Artisanal Spirits Portfolio Rocks!
Distillation 101

Fermentation
Distillation is only possible due to Mother Nature’s gift of fermentation. This naturally occurring phenomenon is a chemical process by which sugar is converted to alcohol by the magical work of yeast. Though many alcohols are created by this method, the one we will concern ourselves with is ethyl alcohol, or ethanol. In its rawest definition, ethyl alcohol is a hydrocarbon that is excreted by yeast after it has processed fermentable sugars. Easily expressed with this equation,

\[
\text{Sugars (Glucose, Fructose, Sucrose) + Yeast = Alcohol + Carbon Dioxide}
\]

fermentation is, however, a very complex chemical process, wherein multiple other compounds are created, such as: acetaldehyde, acetic acid, acetate, diacetyl, esters, ethyl, glycerol, phenols and other alcohols besides ethanol, such as methanol, propanol and butanol.

The earliest forms of alcohols were made using fruits and honey, since both naturally contain fermentable sugars and the process was achieved rather effortlessly. With grain-based alcohols such as beer and saké, the practice of making alcohols demanded a little more effort - grains are starches which must be converted to fermentable sugars through a process called saccharification.

The Science
Ethyl alcohol, or ethanol, is the substance that is referred to when we speak about alcoholic beverages - the stuff that gives you that warm fuzzy feeling; the burning feeling in your throat; the stuff that makes you feel great one moment and stinking drunk the next. However, all alcohol will contain a number of different alcohols. Alcohols molecules are created from chains of carbon (C) atoms and hydrogen (H) atoms that form a group that ends in -OH. The difference between alcohols is simply the length of the chains. Ethanol is the one that most interests us and is the safest to consume in moderation.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{CH}_3\text{OH} & \quad \text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH} & \quad \text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{OH} & \quad \text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{OH} \\
\text{Methanol} & \quad \text{Ethanol} & \quad \text{Propanol} & \quad \text{Butanol}
\end{align*}
\]

The smallest alcohol molecule is methanol, an undesirable in the sense that it makes one feel sick when imbibed, may lead to blindness and, occasionally, to madness and death. All alcoholic beverages contain methanol in minute amounts, though they are more prevalent and harmful in improperly distilled spirits - the methanol molecule is smaller than the ethanol molecule, thus, will boil first in vapor and be contained in the head or foreshots of the distillate (see DISTILLATION below).

The other alcohols created during fermentation are propanol and butanol and have larger molecules than ethanol molecules. Together, they are commonly referred to as fusil oils and will be found in the tail or feints of a distillate. Though these fusil oils are less toxic than methanol, they do lead to headaches and nausea, when found in anything but minuscule quantities.

Distillation
Distillation is actually a very simple process wherein the more volatile elements, such as alcohol are separated from the less volatile elements, such as water, by applying heat to a beer or wine (which is called the wash). Because alcohol evaporates at 173°F and water at 212°F, we are able to trap the resultant alcohol vapors, cooling them back into liquid and thus separating them from the water.

The word distillation comes from the Latin ‘distillare’ which means: to drip down or trickle. It was first discovered in ancient times, being used for such things as making cosmetics, perfumes, essential oils and potable sea water. When beers and wines were first distilled, early Alchemists thought they had found the “elixir of life”, using these early potions for medicinal purposes and religious ceremonies. First called Aqua Vitae (or Water-of-Life) this potent concoction rapidly spread throughout Europe, taking on new, local names, like Eau-de-Vie in France, Vodka (a diminutive of water) in Russia, Aquavit in the Scandinavian countries and Uisige Beatha in Scotland and Ireland, where it would one day be simply referred to as whiskey.
History
The word alcohol is most certainly (and ironically enough) derived from Arabic. Theories position the etymology of alcohol as being derived from Al koh’l. Kohl refers to a black powdered cosmetic that had been produced in the Middle East since the Bronze Age (3500 B.C.), and could be referred to as ‘essence’ or ‘spirit’ - analogous to calling distillates ‘spirits’ in English.

However, what about fermentation? Who invented this magical process of making alcohol? The answer is it was no one person or society. Alcohol is (or was) a gift of nature and happened ‘accidentally’. Hence why alcohol should be, even more so, respected and revered than it is. There are societies, however, that once they had imbibed the mysterious potion, soon spent much of their time and energy in perfecting its production and its consumption.

As nomadic Man ceased his constant roaming and became the hunter/gatherer of later eons, life quickly changed. Local village water became undrinkable because of human pollution, and agrarian society had now given Man an abundance of grain and fruit. What to do? What can we drink that won’t make us ill? How can we preserve all this extra grain and fruit? With alcohol, comes the means to that end.

Alcohol provided early Man with a means of preserving the fruits of labor - literally. With the ability to convert grains and fruits into basic alcohols, Man now had the power to safely ‘store’ most food sources that he had harvested, without spoilage. Other fermentable foods soon became alcohols, such as berries & honey. Thus alcohol, mainly beers and wines, became an intoxicating replacement for unsafe water. (Note that this continued well into the Industrial Revolution, in which alcohol consumption far surpassed that of water - morning, noon and night.)

There is archeological evidence that dates large jars from the Neolithic period (10,000 B.C.) in which beer had been intentionally fermented; this suggests that beer may have preceded bread as a food staple. Mesopotamian, Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations were avid brewers and saw beer and wine as necessities of both secular and religious life. Similarly, other societies, like the Chinese (rice) and South American cultures (maize or corn), made primitive alcohols from anything that would grow.

Throughout the centuries industrious folk in cold climates learned to get more bang for their bucks and developed the precursor to modern distillation - a process whereby alcohol is concentrated by freezing a fermentate and drawing the liquid from the frozen water and solids. While this process was successful at creating higher-proofed beverages, it also allowed harmful, potentially deadly congeners to pass to the final product. It was used widely in Early American settlements to concentrate the alcohol levels of hard apple cider. It led to one hell of a hangover, hence the name - pops kull.

The isolation of ethyl alcohol (through distillation and not freezing) was first achieved by Muslim alchemists in the 8th and 9th centuries. However, new historical evidence may point to earlier alcoholic distillations, most likely from a sugarcane based alcohol and far from the Caribbean, we might add. Evidence of pot stills or “elephant’s heads” found in what is now Pakistan date back to as early as 500 B.C. There also exists evidence of complex distilleries in China dating to shortly after the death of Christ.

Of the Muslims, Geber (Jabir ibn Hayyyan) was instrumental in this discovery (or refinement?) and may have created the first alembic still, which is still used today in some form or other. He noted that the resultant vapors were exceptionally flammable, but that it was generally “of little use, but great importance to science”. Some time later, Rhazes (al-Razi) wrote of the alcoholic distillation of wine and its importance in the use of medicine. Little did they know that the world would one day wake with a terrible hangover. Avicenna or Ibn Sina, a 12th century Persian doctor and scholar, wrote thousands of treatises and books on human anatomy and healing. He wrote several hundred of those about experiences using distillation to create medicines. Nearly three hundred of these are still pristine to this day.

During the 12th century, the technology of distillation quickly spread after the Moorish invasion that went all the way into Spain. From there, during the middle ages, distilleries were being built everywhere and setting the groundwork for classic European spirits, from the Charente region in France (Cognac) to Ireland and Scotland and all the Baltic countries.

The first Europeans to use distillation for beverage alcohol were the scholars at the University of Salerno, around 1100 AD. At the time distilling was considered as much magic as it was science, a divine secret, as it were. Through distillation, the “spirit” of wine was separated from its “body”. By consuming this spirit, they rationalized that they became closer to God. Thus we find the first evidence of the use of spirits in religious practices.
At the turn of the 13th century many advances in distillation technology had been realized. Because of its “spiritual” connection, distillation became largely a venture of the clergy. Monks throughout Europe further refined the techniques and technologies and created “aqua vitae” or water-of-life. Monastic orders practiced distillation throughout the Middle Ages and generated big business. They have been credited with creating the groundwork for some of our finest spirits and liqueurs. Shortly after the “men of the cloth” began distilling, Apothecaries across Europe learned the secrets of the trade and began selling “aqua vitae” or “aqua ardens” as over-the-counter medicines. Readily available and fairly inexpensive, these medicines grew increasingly popular among Europeans of all classes and social stations, not as curatives but as easy means to achieve a buzz.

From the 1300’s through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Age of Reason, distillation became an industry and a craft. From France (cognac) to Germany (schnapps), Britain (scotch whisky, gin) to the lowlands of Holland (genever, corenwijn) the distillation and distribution of spirits became major industry, with distillers’ guilds popping up everywhere. Along the way, the copper pot still was perfected and remains relatively unchanged today.

By the end of the 1600’s Europeans had conquered nearly every corner of the globe and brought their copper pots with them. Through experimentation, they fermented and distilled every fruit or grain they possibly could. Tequila, pisco, bourbon, rum, the list goes on, all are products of this global domination.

The 1800’s brought a time of progress and profitability across the world. During this Industrial Revolution, the pot still came under scrutiny due to its commercial ineffectiveness. The French led the charge in devising and patenting new technology that would allow consistency and mass production. In 1818, Jean-Baptiste Cellier Blumenthal patented the single column still, which revolutionized the distilling industry - his discovery was trumped by an Irishman named Aeneas Coffey, who, in 1830, patented a double column still, which became known as the Coffey Still, the continuous still or the patent still. This immediately changed the face of the distilling industry by introducing a simple, yet previously unavailable facet - choice.

Producers now had the option to do things the old fashioned (craft) way, or the money-making, industrial way. Spirits started to become differentiated accordingly. Pot distilled spirits remained heavier, more aromatic, while continuously distilled spirits became lighter, more refined and exhibited less character: Dutch (Holland) gin versus London Dry; malt whiskey versus blended; full-bodied Jamaican style rums versus Cuban.

**The Pot Still**

The oldest type of distillation equipment known to man is called the pot still (it may have appeared around 500 B.C.). Primarily used to separate liquids for the production of medicines, cosmetics and other ‘magical’ potions. The use and knowledge of the pot still quickly spread through Europe during the Middle Ages.

The pot still contains four parts that are essential to its functioning:
1. A source of heat necessary to boil the wash.
2. An actual pot or container that can be heated, into which the wash will be placed.
3. A head that will trap the resultant vapors and direct them, via ‘the swan’, or neck, to the heat exchanger.
4. A heat exchanger (usually a coil that is immersed in cold water) to convert the vapors back into a liquid.

Remember, the wash that is placed in the pot still must be an alcoholic solution, such as a wine or a beer, to create an alcoholic distillate. Alcohols created by pot still distillation will, in most cases, be heavier, and retain more of the original character...
of the base ingredient used. Alcohols which must be produced in a pot still include Cognac and Single Malt Scotch and, typically, most English style rums.

Note: Do not try this at home! First, distilling at home is illegal and will bring down the Federalies on your butt faster than you can say “Gee, Billy-Bob! What’s all that ruckus?” Secondly, though distillation is a very simple process, it takes a skilled distiller to know when to separate the head (which contains methanol and congeners) and the tail (which contains fusil oils and other undesirables) from the ethanol goodness of the heart.

The Column Still

The invention of the column still (also known as a continuous or Coffey still) in the early part of the 1800’s was one of the most important in the history of distilled alcohol. For centuries, only the very inefficient pot still could produce a distillate, each time having to clean out the pot and refilling it with a new wash. In comes the Coffey still. No longer did production have to stop. It also creates a cleaner, higher alcoholic potion. Without its invention, the world would not have discovered clean tasting gins or have heard of blended Scotch. In fact, chances are, the vodka revolution of the late twentieth century would never have happened.

First invented by the Frenchman Cellier Blumenthal in 1818, then further refined by the Scot Robert Stein in 1826, in the Lowlands of Scotland, this type of distillation helped revolutionize the whiskey industry and was heralded as the new spirit of the Industrial Age. However, it was the Irishman Aeneas Coffey who perfected it and patented it in 1830, thus having his name attached to this innovative new piece of machinery ever since. This allowed for the creation of such well-known whiskey brands, such as Johnnie Walker, Dewar’s and Chivas, to name a few.

What was singular about this form of distillation was that the wash was pumped in from the top of the first column (called the analyzer) where hot steam would rise from the bottom. As the alcohol would fall, hitting hundreds of perforated plates called trays, the rising steam would vaporize the more volatile alcohol molecules, thus carrying them into the next column (called the rectifier), whilst the heavier, congener and fusil oil laden compounds, were ‘trapped’ behind on trays that make up the insides of the columns. Further, unlike the old school pot still, the wash could be continuously pumped into the column without any stoppage of production or having to wash out the still - hence the name continuous distillation.

Maturation & Aging
When tasting a newly distilled spirit, one may wonder
what would possess anyone to consume these Aqua Vitae (aka burning water) on a regular basis. Rough and harsh, with a burning sensation from the mouth to the stomach, how do we go about making this concoction more enjoyable? As the saying goes, time is of the essence; but really, what it should say is: Time is for the mellowing.

Many in the ancient world knew of the benefits of aging alcohol. Most, if not all, alcohols benefit from maturation, which adds complexity, flavor and character to wine, beer & spirit. Depending on the type of alcohol produced and where an alcohol is aged, that time will vary greatly and will have different effects on the liquid. This is especially true of alcohols aged in wood. For the past 5 centuries, wooden vessels have been generally regarded as best for the aging of alcohols; however, it is important to remember that other vessels were used to age alcohols, long before the advent of woodworking and cooperage. Some of these technologies included aging in stoneware, animal skins, pottery, ceramics and troughs. When aging actually began and where, however, is highly debatable.

While aging in oak, it will take at least one year before any distinct enhancements of the spirit are noticeable; eight to ten years will allow a spirit to change dramatically. Since wood is porous in nature and allows alcohol to ‘breathe’, one can imagine that the surrounding climate will have a huge impact on the wood staves and, eventually, on the aging process. Warm to hot weather places, such as Kentucky and the Caribbean, will have shorter aging times because of climatic influences such as humidity - which will stress the wood. Conversely, aging in colder climates, like Scotland for instance, will take longer for any perceivable changes in the spirit to occur.

Besides climate, oxygen will also play its part. Though considered enemy number one of any alcohol (through the process of oxidization), oxygen and oxidization has a positive effect on maturation. Any alcohol that is placed in wood will evaporate over time, reducing the levels and concentrating flavors and aromas. This is commonly referred to as the Angels Share; however, many producers refer to it as the Devils share, for a producer in Cognac, for example, will lose between 2 and 3 percent per year of actual production through evaporation. Think of this as reducing a sauce in cooking, making it more flavorful in the process. Further, congeners will slowly intermix with air and compounds in the wood (lignins and tannins), losing much of their harsh flavors.

The size of an aging vessel will also affect maturation time. When sea travel began in earnest during the late 14th century, the relatively small size of the boats and ports made transporting the larger fermentation vats that had been in use at the time very problematic for the shipping industry. From this grew the use of smaller barriques that were easily manageable on land and ships. Soon it was discovered that alcohols aged better with the liquid alcohol coming into contact with more oxygen. To create a barrel, a cooper (barrel maker) must heat and lightly toast oak staves to make them bendable into the required shapes. This roasting of the oak will influence the spirit significantly; this act will actually release sugars and other flavoring compounds from the wood that will amalgamate with the alcohol. One exceptional example of this is American bourbon, which is required to be aged in new, heavily charred barrels; the toasted barrels will give bourbon its sweetness, toastiness and color that we associate with this type of spirit.

**Filtration**
There are two ways of separating congeners and other impurities from your alcohol. One way, as we have seen, is to distill them out (see DISTILLATION); the other is through filtration. The Russians and Poles were the 19th century forerunners of this cutting-edge technique. Having long produced their korchma (a word that predates Vodka) with the very inefficient pot still and liking it unaged, they came up with the idea of filtration. At first they would run it through sand and felt, trying in vain to make their distillate more palatable. The idea of using charcoal hit them and the results were exceptional - a clean tasting, light and highly quaffable spirit ensued.

By trickling the spirit through several feet of lightly compressed charcoal, the liquid would be stripped of the disagreeable congeners and fusel oil. The resultant spirit would be even cleaner if Beechwood charcoal was used, though one could get comparable results using less expensive birch. The idea spread quickly and was adopted by distillers of several different types of spirits. In particular, charcoal filtration was adopted in the mid-1800’s to make Tennessee whiskey (Jack Daniels, George Dickel) and the process came to be known as the Lincoln County Process. Further, Don Facundo Bacardi applied it to rum production, producing a light, highly mixable product.

**Chaptalization**
Chaptalization, or enrichment, is a process wherein natural or artificial sugars are added to the fermenting mash or to the final product. This process is used widely in the world of alcohol production, from wine, beer and spirits production; however, it is sometimes illegal, but this will depend greatly on a country’s laws and the type of alcohol. Usually, chaptalization will have no consequence on the sweetness levels of the fermented alcohol - the sugars added are simply to produce more alcohol.

**Dilution**
Dilution is the process by which water, typically, is added to an alcohol to either lower the overall alcohol level or to create a more palatable beverage. Though this process is fairly common in the production of spirits, beer and saké, it is rarely, if ever, practiced in the world of wine making.

**Flavoring & Coloring**
Flavoring an alcohol is one of the oldest ways of making the harsh taste of alcohol more palatable. Since ancient time, man has been adding sugars, spices, barks and other aromatic ingredients to wine and beer to change their taste. The Greeks and Italians were some of the first to do this. With the appearance of spirits on the alcohol scene, flavoring became a natural, straightforward way of smoothing out the harsh distillate. Flavoring or extraction techniques will vary depending on the aromatic materials being used and the type of alcohol being produced. The following are the different ways that this can be achieved.

**Compounding**
Compounding is the easiest and least expensive method for flavoring spirits. Typically, a sugar solution flavored either naturally or artificially, is combined with the spirit. Many flavored vodkas and less expensive liqueurs are produced using this method.

**Maceration**
Maceration is a simple process wherein the aromatic ingredients are steeped in a high-alcohol spirit for a period of time, allowing the alcohol to take on the flavors of the ingredients. This method is used for delicate fruits such as berries, stone fruit and bananas. The heat used in distillation (see below) would be detrimental to the natural essences contained in the fruit and would alter their subtle flavors, making maceration a more appealing method of extracting flavors.

Also included under the maceration process is infusion and is used mostly for dried herbs, leaves and plants. As one would make tea, the raw materials are first softened with water and then a heated spirit is poured over them and allowed to soak.

**Percolation**
Percolation, as the name entails, is a flavoring method similar to brewing coffee. A spirit is first heated then sent up and poured over a filter that contains the aromatic agents. As it seeps through, it falls back down and is recirculated through the system again. The process will be repeated multiple times depending on the ingredients being used. This is the favored method for cacao and vanilla, for example.

**Distillation**
As we have seen earlier, distillation is a form of separation; however, instead of applying this to separating alcohol from water, it is used to extract aromatics from ingredients. This method is best for dried ingredients like flowers, plants and seeds. Only a pot still system would be used for such a distillation.
Vodka
Vodka is a distilled alcoholic beverage traditionally known as Russia's national drink, though the Polish might take issue with this. Now a highly international form of alcohol, Vodka (meaning Dear Little Water in Russian) is usually made from grains or vegetables (or any raw carbohydrates, for that matter) and is, almost always, sold unaged. Mistakenly described as being odorless, colorless and flavorless liquor, the best of them will retain the aromas and flavors of the base ingredient used to produce them. With that said, one can consider Vodka as the purest form of a distilled spirit - aqua vitae if you will. This is vastly different than the ancient vodkas of Poland, Russia and Scandinavia, which were pot-distilled, crudely made, oily and fiery. Eventually it was learned that the spirit could be filtered through all manner of materials; charcoal and diamond dust are two examples. This filtration resulted in a much smoother, cleaner distillate. Nearly all vodkas are heavily filtered to this day.

Although minute amounts of vodka were imported into the U.S, in the late 1800’s, it was consumed almost exclusively by Eastern European immigrants. It was not until the 1920’s, with the arrival from Paris of a cocktail called the “Bloody Mary”, that vodka had any real place in American drinking society. Even then it was little known or sought after. It was not until after Prohibition and the arrival of Smirnoff to American shores that vodka started to become popular. World War II brought an alliance with the Soviets and open trade between our nations. After the war ended, it became fashionable and patriotic to drink Vodkatinis, Screwdrivers and Vodka Tonics.

Even through the Cold War, vodka sales grew by huge percentages year after year. By the mid sixties it outsold gin and by 1974 it surpassed bourbon to become the best-selling spirit in the U.S.

Though gin and aquavit can be considered flavored vodka in some form or another, it was not until the mid-1990’s that the American public saw the introduction of the first actual flavored vodkas with the introduction of Stoli Limon. This is quite surprising as the Polish and Russians have been flavoring vodka with everything from chocolate to carrots and dill for centuries. A revolution in the making, flavors now range from the usual citrus flavor to the most exotic and can be flavored in a number of different ways, with no valid international law to govern how this is done. Most are flavored artificially by the process of compounding - adding a flavored sugar base syrup into the distilled concoction, but many artisanal producers infuse their products with all natural ingredients.

Gin
The creation of gin was first credited to the Dutch physician Franciscus de la Boa in 1653, but records show that an Italian, Arnold of Villanova, first mentions a juniper berry flavored aqua vitae four centuries early. Notwithstanding gin’s long association with the Netherlands, many today misguided view Gin as an English distillate - lest they forget that the English called gin Dutch Courage. It’s hard to dispute that Holland is the birthplace of gin. The name genever is the Dutch translation of the word juniper. However, it is the English who took it to the world’s stage, especially in the 1700’s and the so-called Gin Craze, a period often compared to the U.S. crack epidemic of the 80’s and 90’s.

Considered one of the first ‘flavored’ vodkas, gin is usually sold colorless (besides Genever’s thin yellow color), unaged and can be produced in any country. Made from grains such as barley, corn and/or rye, the resultant distillate is flavored with an assortment of different botanicals, with juniper berry leading the pack in most gins. These botanicals may include:
- Juniper Berries & Oils
- Angelica Root
- Coriander
- Bitter Almonds
- Black & White Pepper
- Orange & Lemon Peels
- Star Anise
- Cassia
- Orris Root
- Ginger

...and many, many others.

During Prohibition, gin rose to popularity, as it was fairly easy to approximate the flavor profile by adding all manner of nasty chemicals to rutgot alcohol. After Prohibition was repealed, Americans developed a taste for real gin and it remained our best-selling white spirit until the mid 1960’s.
**Styles of Gin**

London Dry Gin usually contains more corn and is distilled to a higher alcohol level (up to 190 proof). It can be produced all over the world and usually has a stronger presence of juniper. It is generally column-distilled.

The Plymouth style of gin was first produced in the late 1700’s in Plymouth, England. This style must be produced in Plymouth, England from wheat and soft local water. Generally, it is a bit more subdued than London Dry Gin, it is a touch sweeter as well.

Old Tom Gin is a sweetened style of gin that gained popularity in the mid-1800’s in the U.K. and the American west. It virtually disappeared from the shelves in the early 20th century and just now is beginning to make a comeback in the US.

Genever or Hollands Gin is a full-bodied gin with malty aromas and flavors. Usually produced from fermented barley malt, the spirit is redistilled with juniper berries. It is sold both as young, unaged (jonge) or aged in oak (oude). The aged version spends anywhere from four months to three years in oak.

German or Steinhäger Gin must be tripled-distilled and flavored with juniper berries. It is rarely seen in the US.

Modern-Style Gin has no distinct parameters as this category encapsulates all other gins that do not fit into the categories above. G’Vine with its intense florals would fall in this category.

**Other White Spirits**

Though gin and vodka are the white spirits that we first think of, there are many others.

**Aquavit**

Generally produced in the Scandinavian countries, aquavits are usually distilled using potatoes, though other grains may be used. Typically, aquavit is double distilled into a neutral grain alcohol and then distilled a third time with aromatics (or infused with), with caraway and anise being the most common. In this way, they are not dissimilar to gin. Popular in cocktails in 19th century America, aquavit fell out of favor for bartenders for over a hundred years. It is being used by a small segment of bartenders around the country and, when rightly employed, can make a fine drink.

**Shochu**

Shochu is made using a variety of base ingredients such as rice, barley, sweet potatoes (and a multitude of other ingredients), these are intentionally distilled at lower proofs (single pot distillation) to retain the original character of the base ingredient. What makes these unlike vodka, where the grains are malted, Shochu (Japan) and Soju (Korea) use the koji mold to convert the grain starches into glucose to commence the fermentation process.

**And Others**

Irish Poitin, German Korn, Schnapps, Bierschnapps, Okinawan Awamori, American Moonshine, the list goes on and on.

**Rum**

The word itself conjures images of sailors, pirates and the seven seas; of the Caribbean and oversized cocktail glasses with umbrella garnishes; of forming new countries; of slaves and plantations. Even its name changes, occasionally- diverse as where it is produced and in what form in comes in- Rhum, rumbullion, cachaça, Kill Devil, to name but a few. Rum, in some form, was most probably the world’s first spirit. Discoveries in modern-day Pakistan and India confirm that alcohol was being distilled from sugar cane as early as 500 B.C.

It is one of two types of spirits that can be sold aged or unaged (Tequila being the other). Produced from the sugarcane plant, sugarcane juice, molasses or the by products of the sugar refining process, occasionally, they may be flavored with various spices and natural or artificial flavors. By law, rum
bottles must state the country of origin on their labels. Due to the high heat and humidity in most of the Caribbean, most rums from the region will not be aged in wood for more than five years. Although many aged rums are a rich mahogany color, a good amount of their color comes not from wood but from the addition of caramel. Rums from South America can stand up to more extended aging, as the mountainous interiors remain relatively cool.

**Styles of Rum**
The English Style of rums are those from Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, Australia and India, these represent the oldest styles of rum. Rich and heavy, they are usually produced from molasses and are typically pot distilled. Unaged rums sold in the Caribbean are generally bottled at very high proof, sometimes up to 60% ABV.

The French & Brazilian Styles are epitomized by French Caribbean rums (Martinique, in particular with its Rhum Agricole AOC) and the products of Brazil (cachaca.) These styles are made using fresh pressed sugarcane juice and distilled using either Cognac or column stills, though there are exceptions. Whether agricole or cachaca, these rums tend to be lighter in body than their English counterparts and preserve much of their estery funkiness, due to the use of fresh sugarcane juice. They are unmistakably distinct.

The Spanish Style of rum, led by the house of Bacardi, tends to be the lightest of all, because of the use of column still distillation, restrained aging in American oak and charcoal filtration. This process yields rum with a lighter body, subtle flavors and aromas of sugar and vanilla - easily mixable in any cocktail. This is the U.S.’s most popular style of rum, with Puerto Rico as its leader. Currently, this style represents 80% of rum sales. Rums from Cuba, the Dominican Republic and the Spanish Caribbean fall under this category.

**Tequila & Mescal**
Tequila is a distillate that is usually produced from the aguamiel (honeyed water) of the agave plant which is not, as widely believed, a cactus, but rather one of the lily family (Agavacea). Further, Tequila must be produced according to strict governmental regulations and within the delimited geographical areas allowed. In this sense, Tequila, like Cognac, has very much to do with the place where it is produced. In fact, all Tequila is a form of Mezcal but one that was produced within the five legal regions of Jalisco (the most prominent), Guanajuato, Tamaulipas, Nayarit and Michoacán. Likewise, Mezcal can only be produced with the regions of Oaxaca and Chihuahua.

Just remember: **All Tequila is Mezcal, but not all Mezcal is Tequila!**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions of Tequila</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jalisco</td>
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There are two ways to produce Tequila. One is to use the natural sugars produced by cooking the piña (heart) of the agave plant (AKA Maguey); typically the best variety of agave, Agave Tequilana Weber, tipo azul (sub-variety blue), is used and will be as 100% Blue Agave. The other method is to supplant the agave sugars with a mixture of other sugars to create the ferment. However, since 2006, 51% of this Mixto type Tequila must be made from agave sugars. Mixto Tequila can be made into any of the following legal classifications.

Mezcal is generally produced by the same methods; however, they are typically made from different agavacea, which includes Espadin, Sotol and Tobola, and the piña is frequently roasted in earth and stone pits, giving them their smoky character.

**Tequila Classifications**
Blanco (White, Silver or Plata) - smooth and herbaceous, this type must be bottled within 60 days after being produced. Usually aged in stainless steel tanks, but can be legally aged in oak for up to 30 days.

Joven Abocado (Gold) - young, unaged tequila with coloring and flavoring added, typically caramel. This type is generally always Mixto.

Reposado (Rested) - must be aged between a minimum of two to eleven months in oak (usually used Bourbon or Cognac barrels). Aging gives hints of vanilla, spice and produces a mellower character than Blanco.
Añejo - is aged for a minimum of one year or more in small oak barriques. Extra Añejo - the youngest Tequila in this blend must be a minimum of three years.

Whiskey
Whiskey is produced from the fermented mash of grains such as barley, rye and corn, and could, technically, be considered aged vodka. There are many varieties of whiskey; among the more popular are Scotch, Irish whiskey, Rye and American Bourbon.

Scotch Whisky
Perhaps the most famous of all whiskies, Scotch whisky has iodine-like aromas and flavors that come from the peat fires that are used to dry the sprouted malted barley. Peat-flavored water is also mixed with the grain to make the base beer that will be distilled. Other influences, such as heather and sea air will impart different character to the whiskies, depending on the distillery’s proximity to heather fields and the ocean.

All Scotch must be aged a minimum of three years; however, most producers age for longer periods of time - eight or ten years is not uncommon. The age of the whisky, as labeled, refers to its time spent in a cask and not the length of time spent in the bottle. Customarily, the use of different types of oak will vary greatly, with used Sherry, Madeira and Bourbon cask being the most prevalent.

There are a number of different types of whiskies produced in Scotland.

Single Malt Whisky
Produced by a single distillery from a single year, it must be made from 100% barley malt and distilled in pot stills only - the majority are twice distilled. The alcohol levels cannot exceed 165 proof.

Unlike so many other types of distilled spirits, the place of production of Single Malt Scotch Whisky plays an integral role in defining its character because of the diverse regions where the barley is grown and the climate in which the whisky barrels are aged. The following are the regional distinctions of Single Malt Scotch Whisky:

1) Islay Scotch Whiskies are smoky, medicinal, with iodine and brine aromas.
2) The islands of Skye, Mull, Arran and the Orkneys yield similar characteristics, but more elegance and finesse than Islay whiskies.
3) Highland & Speyside are the most famous areas for Scotch Whisky. These areas are heavily influenced by weather, with aromas of violets and honey.
4) Campbeltown whiskies, like Islay, are permeated by iodine, but less smoky.
5) The Lowlands are typically triple distilled and much less distinct then other regions.

Blended Malt Whisky
These whiskies are made from 100% barley malt and are blended from at least two different distilleries. The alcohol levels also cannot exceed 165 proof. Blended Malt whiskies were previously called Vatted Malts.

Blended Scotch Whiskey
This type of whisky is produced by blending grain spirits, single malt whiskies and distilled water. Typically, the blend of whiskies will comprise 60-70% grain spirit to 30-40% single malt. The grain spirit is more often than not produced from column distillation. Andrew Usher made the first blend in mid 1850’s, which was called Old Vatted Glenlivet; other blends quickly followed with names like Walker, Dewar’s and Chivas.

Grain Whisky
Mostly produced by column distillation with alcohol levels as high as 195 proof, the prevailing grains used are corn and wheat, though occasionally they are made from malted barley.

Irish Whiskey
Irish whiskey is primarily made from barley (malted or unmalted), but corn, rye, wheat and oats are
also used to produce these mild and soft whiskies. Frequently blends of column and pot distillation, the whiskey must be aged for a minimum of four years. Unlike Scotch, the blending occurs before the aging process and no peat character is found, since the floors of the malting rooms are solid (with no smoke allowed to permeate the grain) and coal is generally used to fuel the fires.

**American Whiskey**

With a long tradition of distillation in the Old country, new American immigrants brought with them the art, science and desire to make the spirits that had warmed their hearts and souls back home. As sugarcane (rum being America's first distillate) became harder to obtain at the end of the so called Trade Triangle and newly instituted taxation on alcohol by the recently created American government, Scottish, Irish and German immigrants headed west into the land of rye and, later, south into corn land, the frontier offered new ingredients from which to make spirits, all the while escaping the watchful eyes of the revenue men.

There are many different types of whiskeys produced in the United States:

**Bourbon**

Must be legally produced from a minimum of 51% corn, though many producers use as much as 80% in the mash; between 5 to 15% of malted barley assists in the fermentation of the base beer with either rye or wheat supplementing the rest. Contrary to popular belief, bourbon can be produced anywhere in the United States. Although it takes its name from Bourbon County, Kentucky, no bourbon is produced in this dry county. In order to be labeled a Straight Bourbon, the whiskey must be aged for a minimum of two years in new, heavily charred American oak barrels. If the whiskey is aged less than two years it cannot be labeled straight bourbon, as in the case of Tuthilltown Baby Bourbon. No coloring or flavorings can be added.

**Rye Whiskey**

Must be legally produced from a minimum of 51% rye, with corn and malted barley also used. Like Bourbon, Straight Rye Whiskey must be aged for a minimum of two years in new, heavily charred American oak barrels (though, if the aging less than four years, it must be listed on the bottle) and no coloring or flavorings can be added to the distillate.

**Tennessee Whiskey**

Must be produced in Tennessee and made with a mash containing 51% to 79% corn, with the rest being supplemented by rye or wheat and malted barley. The aging requirements are the same as those for bourbon and rye whiskies and no colorings or flavoring are allowed. However, all Tennessee whiskey is twice charcoal filtered, which is referred to as the Lincoln County Process.

**Corn Whiskey**

Must be made from at least 80% corn and aged for a minimum of two years in either un-charred or reused barrels.

**Blended Whiskeys**

Produced with at least 51% neutral grain spirits and distilled to 190 proof or higher, it can be blended with any of the above.

Occasionally, you will encounter bonded whiskey. These can be bourbon, rye or Tennessee whiskies, which are bottled at 100 proof, must be aged for at least four years, be the product of a single distillery and distilled during a single season.

**Canadian Whisky & Other Types of Whiskey**

Typically produced from a blend of corn (51% of the mash bill), rye, wheat and barley, Canadian whiskey is known for its smoothness and elegance. Unlike their neighbors to the South, Canadian whisky can be distilled to any proof and can be flavored with such things as prune and orange juice, sherry and other fruit wines.

Many other countries also produce whiskies of some import and quality, namely Japan, France, Germany and New Zealand. As this category grows, we may see production commencing in places with no tradition of whiskey making.
Brandy
The word brandy derives from the Dutch Brandivijn, which means “burnt wine”, and connotes a distillate made from wine or other fermented fruit juices. Almost always aged, giving them their famous amber color, brandies (more than any another spirit) are dependant on where they are produced. Such famous places as Cognac, France and Jerez, Spain are known world wide as superior areas that make their specific types of brandy.

Cognac
Cognac is considered the finest of all brandies and comes from the Cognac region in France. It is made primarily from the white Ugni Blanc (Trebbiano in Italy), Folle Blanche and Colombard grape varietals and is double distilled in copper pots alembic stills called Charentais. All Cognacs are aged in Troncais or Limousin oak barriques for a minimum of two years.

Within Cognac (and other regions as well), there are classifications to define the spirit. These letters are as follows and are usually combined:

Cognac Age Classifications
- V= Very
- S= Special
- O= Old
- P= Pale
- X= Extra

- V.S.- aged at least 2 years
- V.S.O.P.- aged at least 4 years
- X.O.- aged at least 6 years

Remember that these are only legally required minimums and that some producers will age their distillates much longer.

Armagnac
Armagnac is a brandy that is produced in the Armagnac region of France and is double distilled in pot stills or distilled once or twice in short column stills. While the grapes used are similar to Cognac, Ugni Blanc dominates the wine used for distillation. To be labeled Armagnac requires a minimum age of three years in new French oak, wood from the traditional Monleuzon forest; however, Armagnac more commonly uses Troncais and Limousin oak nowadays.

Armagnac Age Classifications
- V.S.- aged at least 2 years
- V.S.O.P.- aged at least 4 years
- X.O.- aged at least 6 years
- Hors d'Age - must be aged a minimum of 10 years

As in Cognac, these are only legally required minimums, some producers will age their distillates much longer.

Brandy de Jerez
These opulent, dark and slightly sweet brandies are made from the Airen grape varietal and must be aged in used sherry barrels in the district of Andalusia, Spain - home of sherry. The aging is normally done using an aging system called solera, in which a pyramid of casks is used. Bottling of new brandy will come from the oldest cask, leaving behind half the contents of that barrel. It will then be filled with brandy from a younger cask, making sure to leave behind half that cask which will, in turn, be filled with an even younger brandy, and so on. This process produces brandies that may seem older than they actually are - some solera have been around for centuries.

Other Types of Brandy
Brandies are produced in any country where one might find wine being produced.

Pisco
The spirit of Peru and Chile, these brandies are all produced from clones of the Muscat grape: Quebranta, Italia, Torontel to name a few and aged in porous clay amphora that allow for oxidization like in oak, but without adding any wood influence.

Calvados and Applejack
These are brandies that are distilled from apples. Calvados must be distinctly from apples grown in Normandy, France. Applejack can be made anywhere in the world.

Eau de Vie
Refers to brandy that is distilled from any fruit other than grape, Pear Williams for example.

**Pomace Brandies**
Also known as Marc or Grappa, these are made from the left over seeds, stems and skins from the wine making process.

**Liqueurs, Bitters & Aromatized Wines**
This group of alcohols is besieged with thousands of different brands made from every spice, plant, leave, herb, fruit, vegetable, flower, bark and spirit known. Perhaps some of the most ancient types of alcohols consumed by man, many of these liqueurs, bitters and aromatized wines were first created in the hopes of preserving the restorative and medicinal qualities of the natural base ingredients used to flavor them. Depending on the ingredients used, there are several methods of adding flavor to the base spirit, as discussed in Distillation 101 of this book.

**Liqueurs**
Also known as cordials, they are best defined as alcoholic beverages that have been flavored with fruit, herbs, nuts, spices, flowers, or cream and bottled with added sugar. This category includes creams, such as Irish cream, sambuca, curacao, anisette, limoncello, and many others. Generally, they are made using a cane or grain based spirit and their methods of production will vary greatly.

**Bitters**
Most bitters are defined as liqueurs but their distinctiveness grants them their own category. Known as Amaro in Italy, bitters date back to the early days of making spirits and masking the harshness of the distillate. With a glut of secret recipes and traditions guiding their production, bitters usually get their bitterness from quinine and can be served as either an aperitif or digestif, depending on the style of the product. This group also includes the intense and powerful aromatic bitters that are meant to be consumed in only small doses, such as Angostura and Peychaud bitters.

**Fortified Wines**
Conceivably, the oldest type of alcohols available, this category includes vermouths and other types of flavored wines. More often than not, the wines are fortified by adding brandy and steeped with various flavorings.

**The Spirit of Selling**
The purpose of this chapter is to help define and illuminate the important aspects of selling spirits and how it differs from wine sales. Selling is selling; but generally “bar” people are a breed apart from the wine buyers and need to be approached with a different skillset.

In your current accounts, you may find that the spirits buyer and sommelier are one and the same and you need speak to only one person. Still a separate tack needs to be taken when the gears are shifted to the spirit side. Whether there is a beverage or bar manager in place, or the owner takes care of all the purchasing, you need to speak the language. Some of the lingo that you’ll be using will take getting used to. For example, half bottles or splits become 375’s, and liters and 750’s will become part of your everyday vernacular. Other terms we use in this guide will be familiar. We use a lot of the same terms when tasting spirits as when we do when we taste wine. Many of them are for your own reference, as not all bev. managers care if a gin exhibits notes of forest floor.

The Tippling Bros. are not and never have been spirit or wine salesmen. We would stink it up royally. We don’t possess the desire or special set of skills it takes to do what you do. What we do possess is over forty years combined as in the trenches on-premise guys with lots of experience as buyers, both on the wine and bar sides. We’ve dealt with scores of salespeople; the good, the bad, the really bad and
the really exceptional. We hope that our insights, in combination with your knowledge and passion will keep you solidly in the latter camp for many years to come.

The Spirits Buyer

Who is the spirits buyer? The owner of the establishment, the general manager; the sommelier, the head bartender; sometimes, all of the above wrapped into one. What is important is to recognize an experienced spirits buyer over the ones that simply buy the most typical and/or the most popular. In fact, this latter type of buyer is most common. Unlike the world of wine buyers and sommeliers, there is scant interest in trying to build original and conceptual spirits programs. Further, as you gain more experience in selling spirits and visit more accounts with a bottle in your bag, you will discover many sommeliers and so-called ‘winegeeks” have little interest in sampling distillate and pay little to no attention to what is being served behind the bar. This wine-centric attitude is quickly changing, if not by choice, then by necessity - the drinking public is becoming a savvier bunch.

You won’t often hear a som. say that he/she is not interested in taking on another Cab. because they already have way too many. You will hear a spirits buyer say he couldn’t possibly take on another gin because he already has four behind the bar. Bars are about moving product and bottom line. Even when going for placements over heavy depletion, we need to be aware.

Here’s a short list of things to look for in an inexperienced spirits buyer:
1) Vodka - if the bar carries more than 30 different vodkas and all assorted flavors.
2) POS items - if the bar is littered with branded coasters, fruit trays and neon lights.
3) Top shelf - if the top shelf has two bottles. One is Hennessy, the other is Macallan.
4) Cocktail List - if the account doesn’t have a printed cocktail list or has one that was cobbled together to use up the thirteen bottles of Midori, the blue curacao and the 5 cases of Hymie’s triple sec that got drop-shipped.

It will not take that much to educate the buyer and show him/her what great spirits and liqueurs can do for his cocktail program. As long as you believe in and know your product and can speak as to how it will benefit his bottom line, they’ll listen. Now if you can whip up a cocktail for him/her as well, you’re in like Flynn.

Get to the Bartender

Read our lips (well these next few words, actually): Get to the bartender. If the bold face type wasn’t obnoxious enough to drive the point home, we’ll say it again. GET TO THE BARTENDER!!!

The bartender is your first and last line of defense. She can be your best ally or your worst enemy. The bartender makes the decisions as to what makes its way to the back bar. Believe it. The person behind the stick is the one who has to sell the product. Bartenders are brand loyal. If they have a spirit that they know to be of high quality, know a little something about where it comes from and how it’s made AND know the product’s “story”, they will reach for it every time. Include the bartender on every tasting, tell him the story, give him as much simple knowledge about the products as you can. When you show up at an account with a bottle in your bag, have your bar kit with you. Ask him if you can show him a simple cocktail, or, better yet, ask him to make the cocktail for you and suggest ways it could be improved. Talk to them; ask him/her about spirits categories and what people are drinking. It’s amazing what you will pick up. Furthermore, your creating a relationship with the ones who will be slinging drinks and who will be talking directly to guests about spirits and cocktails. Let the bartender know that you know your products and be passionate. Stop in to your accounts from time to time and have a drink. Show them that you are supportive and extend the relationship to friendly camaraderie. Bar people trust bar people.

Do not treat the bartender like he/she is just a bartender. Do not walk to the bar and ask her to get the manager, without asking her name and if she’d like to taste something. If a bartender doesn’t like you or the way you present, he/she won’t like your products and will not sell them.

What is a Quality Spirit?

Like wine, determining the quality of a spirit is very much a subjective undertaking that may be very difficult to quantify, where even a tableful of experienced spirits tasters may have very different reactions and opinions to the same distillate.
When tasting, an important concept to keep in mind is not to compare apples with oranges, if you know what we mean. You cannot impartially compare an aged rum with a white rum that has seen no oak; likewise, to contrast a pot distilled vodka with one that was produced by means of a column still will give you completely different tasting results and might unfairly judge one of them.

So what should we look for? These are a few questions you may want to ask yourself:
1) **Method of Production** - How the distillate was produced? Pot or column? How many times was it distilled? Variations of these factors will yield vastly different distillates.
2) **Cleanliness of Distillate** - Does the spirit burn the palate? Does it have a cool, menthol like experience in the mouth? Does it seem to contain congeners and fusel oils?
3) **Place of Production** - Where was the distillate produced? How has terroir affected this alcohol?
4) **Ingredients** - What ingredients were used to produce the spirit? Are they still evident in the spirit?

**Aging** - was the distillate aged? How long was it aged for? Where was it aged? Remember that aging will create a smoother distillate

**Filtration and Flavoring** - how was the distillate filtered? Was it flavored, and if so, how was it flavored? These will undoubtedly change the final product.

Ultimately, your subjective input will determine if you enjoyed a distillate or not. You may even find that you prefer a certain type over another - say gin over vodka. Over time, however, as you gain more experience in tasting spirits, you may discover new pleasures and tastes in spirits you thought you were not partial to. Cheers and happy tasting.

**Tasting Spirits**
Though there are similarities in tasting spirits to tasting wine, there are some differences we must contend with. Your expert tasting abilities will be an invaluable asset to bridge the gap. First, there are obviously much higher levels of alcohol in spirits that can make tasting multiple spirits exhausting for the palate. It also takes practice to taste through that higher alcohol to find the nuanced aromatics and flavor profiles. Quality of the distillate is a bit harder to determine than is the quality of a wine. But, like wines, spirits have a beginning, a mid and a finish, and balance and integration are key.

As we all know from sampling wine, tasting is not an exact science and is very subjective. Everyone experiences flavors and sensations differently. This is even more the case with spirits. There are a lot more volatile compounds at play. There are no right or wrong answers. Being able to describe one’s experience in tasting should be the goal.

Here are a few pointers to make tasting spirits more enjoyable:

**Glassware** - as wine salespeople, we may find ourselves reaching for a wine glass to taste spirits. This may not be the ideal choice. The inward curvature of a wine glass has a tendency of accentuating the alcohol present in the spirit, potentially ‘offending’ the wine-centric nose of a wine buyer or one less familiar with tasting spirits. A simple rock glass may do the trick. Or be different and carry your own glasses.

**Water & Saltines** - if you are tasting multiple distillates in one sitting (less than 5 is recommended), having water and salted crackers will allow the buyer to experience the different distillates with ease.

**Nosing** - Approach with caution, remembering the increased alcohol. Taking a big old whiff of whiskey will burn the olfactory membranes and render your palate useless for the rest of the day. Swirl very gently. Spirit is very volatile. Nose several inches above the glass at first. When you get your nose in the glass, take very shallow sniffs. It helps many people to open and breathe through the mouth.

**Taste twice** - As a general rule when tasting spirits, one should taste the spirit twice. Once to ‘clean’ the palate, especially if you are tasting more than one. The second to evaluate.

**Spitting** - Spitting is crucial. There’s much more alcohol to be absorbed by the tongue.

**Mixing a Cocktail** - When tasting accounts on spirits, you will be best served to have them taste the products as they’ll be used. Taste them straight, then suggest a simple cocktail be made. Many people like to add a few drops of water when tasting spirits. This will soften the heat of the distillate and allow more subtlety to be experienced.
Spirit Descriptions
Here is a less than exhaustive list of descriptors we can use while evaluating spirits:

**Appearance**
Clarity - clear, cloudy, particles, sediment, gas, crystals

Brightness - brilliant, star bright, day bright, dull, opaque

Intensity - pale, light, medium, rich, deep, dark

Legs/Tears - slow, fast, hanging, sheeting, coating, viscous, thin, medium-wide, full

Hue/Color - white, silver, pewter, green, brass, straw, gold, pink, rose, copper, salmon, orange, amber, cherry, purple, garnet, ruby, brown

**Aroma & Bouquet**
Fruits - apples, apricots, bananas, black berries, black cherries, blueberries, cantaloupe, cherries, currants, dates, figs, grapefruits, gooseberries, guava, honey-dew, lemons, limes, mamey, mango, oranges, papayas, passion fruit, peaches, pears, pineapple, plums, pomegranate, raspberries, tangerines, strawberries, watermelon

Vegetables - cucumber, bell pepper, green peppers, green/black olives, green bean

Nuts - acorns, chestnuts, almonds, toasted almonds, walnuts, bitter almonds, marzipan, hazelnuts, lychees, pistachios

Floral - violets, lilacs, roses, irises, carnation, chrysanthemum, geraniums, sweet briar, heather, hyacinth, verbena, cloves, honeysuckle, jasmine, orange blossoms, apple blossoms, peonies, peach blossoms, chamomile

Soil - earth/terrior, minerals, chalk, limestone, slate, clay, volcanic, pencil lead, barnyard, gravel, dark, petrol, tar, concrete, wet stones

Alcohol - low, medium, high, balanced, unbalanced, medicinal, hot, sharp, clean, smooth, unobtrusive, affected, compounded

Spice/Herbs - nutmeg, ginger, basil, oregano, dill, grass, allspice, coriander, cloves, cinnamon, black pepper, white pepper, spearmint, peppermint, thyme, tarragon, tobacco, fresh cut grass, fresh cut hay, dried hay, chervil, cilantro, mint, shiso

Forest/Other - woods, cedar, cigar box, truffles, eucalyptus, mushroom, tree bark, damp, musty, gamy, wet leaves, leather, saddle, animal, wet dog, bacon fat, horsy, chemical

Cleanliness - clean, crisp, fresh, dirty

Acid - flabby, low, medium, high, acidified, citrus, green apple, fruit & acid balance, fruit & acid unbalance

Evidence of Fermentation/Distillation/Filtration - no oak, faint oak, strong oak, vanilla, concrete, sawdust, nutty, clean, fresh fruit, stemmy, weedy, rustic, port/sherry, acid in the nose, reduced, cooked, banana, bubble-gum, butterscotch, creamy, buttery, doughy, toast, spirtzy quality in nose, dirty/muddled, matchhead, sulfur, yeast, grain, soapy

**Taste & Mouthfeel**
Tannins - low, medium, gripping, over, overly-tannic, short, long, fruit, wood, balanced, unbalanced

Sugar - extremely dry, dry, medium dry, sweet, very sweet, balanced, unbalanced

Texture - thin, light, velvety, soft, medium, round, full, subtle, moderate, aggressive, forward, simple, medium, complex, balanced, unbalanced

Structure - uninteresting, simple, medium, complex, exciting
Speak the Lingo
While sophisticated wine-speak will allow you to comfortably converse with a sommelier, some of those terms might fly right over a head of bartender who might not possess the same skill sets. Learning the lingo of the stick is an important way of leveraging yourself into the world of the barkeep.

There are multiple books out there that will help you learn the basics of the bar. Here’s a short list from some notable authors:

The Complete Book of Spirits - Anthony Dias Blue
The Craft of the Cocktail - Dale Degroff
Straight Up or On The Rocks - William Grimes
Raising the Bar - Nick Mautone
Mixologist: Journal of the American Cocktail - Anistatia Miller & Robert Hess
The Joy of Mixology - Gary Regan
Imbibe! - David Wondrich

A Short List of Current Players
Tony Abou-Gamin - aka Modern Mixologist, mixologist; consultant
Dale Degroff - aka King Cocktail; Beverage Alcohol Resource main partner; author
Eben Freeman - Tailor; mixologist; molecular mixologist
Robert Hess - aka Drink Boy; author; mixologist
Allen Katz - Director of Southern Wine & Spirits NY Academy of Spirits & Mixology
Eben Klemm - B.R. Guest corporate mixologist; molecular mixologist
Francesco Lafranconi - Director Southern Wine & Spirits Nevada Academy of Spirits & Mixology
Jim Meehan - owner of PDT, freelance writer; mixologist
Junior Merino - The Liquid Chef; mixologist; consultant
Steve Olson - aka Wine Geek; Beverage Alcohol Resource partner; wine & spirits guru
F. Paul Pacult - The Spirits Journal; Beverage Alcohol Resource partner; author
Gary Regan - Ardent Spirits.com; author; mixologist
Julie Reiner - owner of Flatiron Iron Lounge & Clover Club; mixologist
Audrey Saunders - owner of Pegu Club; mixologist
David Wondrich - Beverage Alcohol Resource partner; author, mixologist

Know Your Clientele
With a portfolio comprised of small production, artisanal spirits, you may find it difficult to get access into certain accounts. You know the deal, even though it may not be legal. A to-remain-nameless-big-spirits-company comes in and ‘buys’ the cocktail list and spirits placements for untold amounts of money. This may, in fact, be a segment of the market that you cannot penetrate at all. However, doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try. Here’s why:

Who’s the Boss - unless the buyer is pocketing the money directly, many times its the idea of the owner(s) to take from distributors and suppliers to pay off countless opening costs. The buyer with integrity may just go ahead and sneak it into the program.
Price Point - our spirits might just fit into a sweet spot, either on the low or high-end.
Uniqueness - our spirits offer a unique diversity that some of the big houses can not supply. Especially true if you come armed with a repertoire of signature cocktails.

Rock and Roll - you are a great salesperson. You have a great product, wit, charm and sparkling dinner conversation. Building personal relationships in the bar business will take you miles.

The Story
Like every wine, every distillate has a story. Knowing and creating the story is paramount in making you a top shelf spirit salesperson. Why? Buyers love stories. They’re able to relate to them, to share them with guests and staff alike, and to feel closer to the brand. While knowing basic facts about production, other technical aspects and how it tastes help in story building, it is more the tangible facts, like who created the brand and why, where is it from, how long has it been around, that make the story stick.
Green Chartreuse is made by Carthusian monks. It’s made from 130 ingredients, and, at any given time, only three people in the world know the recipe. It’s an acquired taste, but the story sells it.

The Follow-Up
As any seasoned sales veteran will tell you, it's all about A.B.C - nothing else. However, it seems that in the business of wine and spirits sales, it might be more about STS (Sowing the Seeds). It might even be more accurate when we speak of spirits sales. Since spirits are typically sold a bottle or two at a time, a buyer who may have enjoyed the spirit and sees potential but might not buy at the time of tasting. This is why the follow up process is key to spirit placements.

Support your accounts. Stop in and buy drinks. Bring distillers by for a chat when they are in town. Use your good accounts to host cocktail tastings, so they can make a little money. You'll become the go-to person.

The Tale of Stan the Man
For a few years I ran the bar at a successful restaurant in NJ. One of my liquor reps was Stan the Man. This is how he introduced himself to everyone. Stan was old school.

Every Wednesday morning Stan the Man would stop by to see what I needed. Tucked under his arm would be a giant brown paper bag full of bagels. All the servers and bartenders waited for his arrival. When he showed up, he was always smiling and gregarious. Nothing could bring this guy down. I later found out that his girlfriend was battling severe breast cancer throughout most of the time I dealt with him.

He knew everyone's name, from the managers to the servers, even some of the regulars and made it a point to shake each of their hands and address them personally.

If Stan had a new product that he knew we could sell, he'd ask me if I wanted to try it and then get very excited, telling me everything he could about it. Sometimes I'd see other bottles in his bag and inquire about them. He'd say, "Nah. That's not for you guys. Won't work here". Twice a week I got a call, on order days. I never had to call Stan to place an order. He called me, and he knew what time I placed my orders.

Every holiday the bar got a card. Every birthday, I got a card. Everything that Stan ever sold me I bought... and sold. I think he had probably 75% of my back bar by the time I left.

How to Read a Cocktail Menu
A similar approach to studying an accounts wine list can be applied to the cocktail list, giving you, first, an insight into the likes and dislikes of the buyer, all the while revealing potential weaknesses on the list that could initiate a sale.

Here are some tips to navigating the most onerous of cocktail lists.

The 'Bought' List - there is a strong likelihood that a 'branded' menu - (a cocktail list where the specific names of the alcohols are listed) was paid for by a distributor or supplier, either through legal or illegal means. Such a cocktail list may be hard to crack, though not impossible. Look for an overabundance of a particular spirits category on the list. G'Vine might be the perfect alternative to one of their five vodka cocktails.

Highbrow vs. Simple Bar - it takes just a few seconds to peruse a list to determine the type of establishment. In a serious cocktail bar one might find a bar littered with bottles of bitters and bartenders squeezing fresh citrus. For a simpler type of program...well you know, we've all been to one of these watering holes. Cocktails like the Vertigo are the perfect entree to these types of establishments.

Size of the List - they say that size does not matter. Well, in this case it just might. A list of thirty cocktails, all with some syrupy ingredients can be paired down to the ten that really sell. Help the account by letting them know that they can cut costs and labor. Suggest fresh alternatives using our marks to make true signature cocktails.

Classics - suggest that your accounts, if they have a list, add a section of five or six true vintage cocktails. Whip a few up and show them how our portfolio makes fantastic classics. If your account does not have a list, this might be the perfect way to start.
Choose a rocks glass over a wine glass for tasting spirits; the curvature of the latter may over-accentuate the alcohol content.

Start a safe distance away - and start with shallow sips to avoid burning sensitive olfactory membranes!

The first sip is to clean the palate, the second is to evaluate.
It’s best to taste spirits the way they’ll be consumed - taste straight first then mix a simple cocktail or else add a few drops of water to bring out the flavors of the distillate.

If you’re tasting multiple spirits (not more than 5 is recommended) have water and saltines on.
Placement Opportunities
Since you are a skilled salesperson already, you will find multiple opportunities to place spirits within an account where you have an existing relationship or a new one that truly wants the spirits you carry. This is selling spirits made easy. What is important is to focus on recognizing further opportunities. Here are a few things to look for while you scan the back bar and review the cocktail list:

Spirit Categories - are all the spirit categories covered, from applejack to amaro?

Drink Categories - are there any possibilities via the cocktail list, through the creation of a specialty cocktail or the addition of established classic?

Seasonality - are there any opportunities based on seasonal options - such as a light, white rum for the summer or a heavy, aged one in the winter?

Pricing - are there any price points that can be targeted, either on the cocktail list or spirits selection?

Specialties - Do they know that the Pisco Sour is one of the hottest drinks around? Did they even know that organically made gin and whiskey existed? Their Beefeater drinkers would flip over a gin made with grape flowers.

How to Build a Cocktail Menu
There is an art to building a smart, concise cocktail list or so we like to think - we are consultants after all and need to get paid. However, don’t let this stop you in trying to help an account with a few cocktails or actually building the whole list from scratch. Here are a few steps to ease the process:

Know Your Account - not all accounts will use the same spirits, ingredients and techniques to make cocktails. Be mindful of what type of staff work the establishment- are they seasoned veterans or baby-faced newbies? Do they squeeze their own juices? What type of glassware do they have?

Diversity of Spirits - just remember this: not everyone is a gin drinker. Though you may have an affinity the the Dutch Courage, doesn’t mean everyone else does. Build a cocktail list with a variety of different spirits.

Diversity of Price - you want to seek a balance in the pricing of cocktails, creating some with more expensive ingredients and spirits, while others use simpler, more economical contents to build the drink.

Classics vs. Specialty Cocktails - research a few old-school cocktail books to find some libations of a bygone era to dot your list. However, try to find a few that have not been revived, if you will. It simply demands a little research. Also, you can make twist on a classic recipe to come up with your own signature cocktail.

Smaller the Better - like a wine list with too many pages, a small, concise and well thought out list is infinitely better than the long sprawling list that takes one too long to find a selection. Ten cocktails is perfect.

Be Different- Take chances with ingredients and preparation techniques.

Though this only scratches the surface of what it takes to be a star mixologist, it should give you the basic building blocks to write your own list.

Beverage Costs
When we discussed the buyer in an earlier section, we did not broach the most important topic for many buyers; how much does it cost and what can I charge for it?

Simple questions; however, as salespeople, we need the tools to answer them. The first is, obviously, the easiest. The price is the price as it is listed in “the book.” Before we tackle the second, more intricate question, lets take a look at the beverage industry and some of the standards for costing and pricing.
On Premise Costing & Pricing
Our experiences in wine sales have taught us that, for the most part, the standard mark-up for wines that will be featured on a list is 250%- a bottle that wholesales at $10 it will be priced at $30. We know, however, that some will gouge the customer for much, much more. Some, on the other hand, don’t feel the need and have a reasonable mark-up structure between 150%-250% (maybe unreasonable, if you think of NYC rents).

At the typical 300%, a restaurant/bar can aspire for a 33% beverage cost, excluding theft and breakage. Great! But nothing to write home about. How can we go about getting those costs down, without charging more? Spirits, cocktails and putting our hands on a coveted liquor license. With these ‘tools’ we might be able to run an 18%-24% beverage cost - an industry standard. There are establishments that run much higher - the high-end cocktail lounge that spares no expense in serving the best cocktail, for instance, might have a beverage cost in the range of 32%-38%, settling for a lower profit margin. At the other extreme, there might be a club running a cost below 12%, serving bottles of vodka at $400 when the cost of that bottle was less than $40.

Off Premise Costing & Pricing
Pricing structures will vary much more in off-premise accounts because of such factors as location, competition, supply and demand and purchasing power. With off-premise wine mark-ups we might find averages between 30% to 100%. Nonetheless, with spirits we see much lower mark-up numbers because of the strength of ‘perceived pricing’ of certain brands and spirit categories within the market. Point being: you can only charge so much for a bottle of Jack Daniels before someone tells you to take a hike and they walk right out of your store.

With a range of ultra-premium spirits in our portfolio, we must convince the off-premise buyer of the salability of our products. Where it’s legal and applicable, taste them and maybe make them a cocktail. Demand the real estate that our marks warrant.

The Cost Per Ounce
For wine, we don’t generally have to worry about small numbers. Your account is going to buy a bottle for a certain price and put it on his list at a markup. If its going on the by-the-glass list, it’s priced so that one glass covers the bottle cost.

With spirits, it’s a different game. We’re dealing fractionally. Bar buyers are much more acutely aware of cost and markup. There is a much greater margin for error. When a customer buys a bottle of wine, that product is sold and profit is made. When a bottle of armagnac is opened behind a bar, many things could happen before a profit is realized. A bartender could accidentally over pour a few drinks or spill some of the bottle, etc. The more informed you are as to the financials behind bar costs, the more you can speak the language with your account buyers.

Below is some helpful information to make sure you can best serve your customers.

- 1 liter = 33.8 oz = 22 (1.5oz) pours or 16 (2oz) pours
- 750 ml = 25.4 oz= 16 (1.5oz) pours or 12 (2oz) pours
- 375 ml = 12.7 oz= 8 (1.5oz) pours or 6 (2oz) pours

The cost per ounce is the bottom line for determining profit. To determine that number, one simply divides the wholesale cost by the number of ounces in the bottle. For example, if a liter bottle of vodka costs $26.00, you would compute the following:

$$\frac{26}{33.8 \text{ oz}} = 0.77 \text{ per ounce}$$

If an account pours 1.5 oz per drink, it will cost them $1.16 to produce a cocktail, plus the cost of other ingredients. In order to determine if your products fit an accounts cost structure, we have to know at what cost percentage the account operates.

Let’s use 20% as a model. Divide the portion cost by the desired cost percentage:
$1.16/.20 = $5.80

The account would need to sell the drink at $5.80 to achieve a 20% cost percentage.

Mixology 101

By definition, mixology is the skilled practice of mixing cocktails and other drinks. It seems a thoroughly modern term, springing up in the last five or so years to lend credibility to the craft of cocktail creation. The word mixologist, a title bandied about far too often and usually self-professed, refers to one who is quite knowledgeable with different alcohols, ingredients and techniques and is adept at formulating and devising original cocktails, as well faithfully committing to memory the histories and recipes of forsaken “classic” drinks. The reference itself is actually not new. It was first coined in 1856 as an affectionate, yet somewhat patronizing slang for a bartender and appeared in cocktail books from 1862 through the mid 1930’s.

Most probably we have some overzealous PR guru to thank for resurrecting the term, spinning it and applying it to some bartender who was doing unusual things with cocktails in the late 90’s. Regardless the term is here to stay, as are the newly minted offshoots “bar chef” and “cocktailian”. Admittedly, we are not overly enthused about being referred to by any of the aforementioned titles - all a bit highfalutin for us. But being what it is, we’ll stick with mixologist. Mixologists get write-ups in major national publications. Mixologists have groupies.

All of this would be immaterial if it weren’t for the fact that we are currently immersed in a sort of Platinum Age of cocktails. What started as a rebirth of the martini in the mid-90’s and led to the age of the Cosmo and the ‘take any word you like and add tini’ tini at the turn of the century, has evolved into a bona fide cocktail culture. Americans are drinking cocktails again, seeking out new and unique offerings, embracing classics like the Manhattan and Old-Fashioned, and discovering “new” classics like the Sazerac, the Mai Tai and the Negroni. Bartenders are learning to use fresh juices and ingredients and are lining their shelves with a much more diverse array of spirits and liqueurs. The Mojito is so ubiquitous at this point that there is a chewing gum on the market that shares its name. No, it doesn’t get you buzzed. We tried.

Why has this occurred? Why does that barman who’s been making margaritas with artificially-flavored gloop out of a gallon bucket now have to, grudgingly, learn to use fresh lime juice? Why does he have to start carrying more than two marks of gin? Why does he have to learn the recipe for a Sidecar? Because his customers demand it! And because, as consumers have become increasingly savvy of all things gastronomic. We celebrate food and want more and better. We love wine; we love craft beer, single malt scotch and ultra-premium vodka. We read Food and Wine. Bobby Flay and Bourdain are heroes.

As spirits salespeople we need to be keenly aware that our accounts must stay ahead of the curve in regards to the cocktail culture. Although signature and classic drinks are now woven into the fabric of the American dining and bar scene, new trends are constantly emerging and we must be vigilant in staying informed. 95% of our accounts will not have a mixologist on staff or anyone who will take the time to stay on top of what’s hot. The more informed we are, about our portfolio and the current pulse of mixology, the more we can passionately share why our products are the best choices for what is new and innovative and what will bring excitement and bottom-line revenue to their beverage programs. This will also show your account buyers and bartenders that you are looking out for their best interests and will build a positive lasting relationship. They will look to you and Classic and Vintage/Domaine Select as their “go to’s”. This, in combination with your mixological prowess, will go miles and miles in terms of building trust. The more you can show them that you speak the language and know your way around a cocktail, the more likely they’ll be to stock their back bars and fill their drinks’ lists with our products.

History

This section will serve as valuable resource into the basics of mixology. It is meant to be a reference guide that will give you enough information to talk shop and confidently construct balanced drinks and cocktails. It is also, we hope, one that you’ll return to from time to time to refresh your skills and, more importantly, thumb through the history section. Looking backward in time through the curve of a martini glass can provide a fascinating perspective into the shaping of our nation.

While we think of the cocktail as a uniquely American invention and take great pride in the fact that
we were the forerunners and pioneers of what has become known as mixology, we must realize that the concept of mixing alcoholic beverages together and/or with other ingredients has been going on virtually as long as alcohol has existed.

There is evidence to show that both the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians mixed grape wine with fermented honey and herbs to serve at religious gatherings. Relics from the funeral of King Midas, in 700 B.C., show that a similar mixture; one of wine, mead, barley beer and herbs, was served. The ancient Greeks and Romans were known to cut their lesser-quality wines with water, turpentine, pine pitch, barley and oats, even dried cheese and other nastiness. The Chinese, centuries before the birth of Christ, were studying the effects of infusing grape and rice wines with medicinal herbs. We would not be lucky enough to have today brands like Averna or other amari if early Mediterranean distillers weren't making such bad alcohol. They needed to cut it with something to make it palatable, so they infused herbs, barks, spices, fruit peels-whatever they could find. Ultimately they realized that they could come up with combinations that tasted pretty damned good.

Punch
The first real precursor to modern cocktails came in to being in the 1600's in colonial India. Punch, as it became known, was a combination of five ingredients - spirit, sugar, water, citrus and spice (usually tea). It's not known whether it was an Indian creation or a devise of English sailors and merchants. Most probably it stemmed from a traditional Indian beverage that was doctored up to feed the Brits' need to get sauced. It's name is believed to be a derivation of the Hindi word for five, panch, referring to the five necessary ingredients.

Punch was generally served hot, as ice was a highly coveted commodity until the middle of the 19th century. It was also thought that drinking hot beverages in a hot climate, like India's, would cool the body down. Punch was brought back to England and became wildly popular, especially with the accessibility of low quality gin and aqua vitae. It spread throughout Europe, with different types of spirit substituted. The very wealthy took theirs iced, while commoners drank it hot or slightly chilled by the addition of cool water. Although punch was generally made and served by the cup, enterprising English tavern owners began making it by the bowl or bucket, so as to be able to serve more tipplers and extract more cash. By the end of the 1600's the “punchbowl” became de rigeur.

Pre-Prohibition
Let's face it, our Forefathers were lushes. These guys, our national heroes, were basically loaded 24/7. Hell, the water wasn't safe to drink, and a patriot needs to stay hydrated. After the Revolutionary War ended in 1783 through the first decades of the the 1800's, Americans were drinking approximately three times what we consume today.

Mostly due to the freedom of English tariffs on imported alcohol, brandy, gin and whiskey flowed rather freely, and industrious American tavern-keeps in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and other cities were mixing it up with eggs, ale, molasses, oats and other ingredients. Pre-cocktail concoctions had fanciful and straightforward names: Phlegm-cutter, Gum-tickler, Fog-cutter, Anti-fogmatic, Flip, Sling. All were meant to be taken in the morning to clear the evils of a heavy night's drinking the night before. After one or two of these, a statesman could get back to civilized drinking and move on to the brandy.

The Cocktail first hit the American scene in 1806 in an editorial in the Balance and Columbian Repository, a periodical based in Hudson, New York. It was defined in a quote as, “a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water and bitters-it is vulgarly called a bittered sling”. Like its predecessors, it was recommended to take in the morning to curb the effects of a hangover, which most men found they woke to regularly. It was initially considered to be medicinal because of its use of bitters. Bitters, in general, were drunk straight as a “curative”.

The cocktail's popularity grew throughout the early part of the century, and as our nation spread westward, so too did our favorite remedy. And, as ice became easier to store and cheaper to ship cross-country, it became a staple ingredient in the cocktail.

The origin of the name Cocktail is nebulous. There are as many theories as to the etymology as there are spirits in our portfolio. Some say that there was a certain Wild West madam and saloon-owner who would stir fancy drinks with a rooster's tail feather for virility. Another says that a Mexican princess named Xoctl would mix elixir-type beverages for visiting dignitaries. Yet another traces the cocktail's roots to an apothecary in New Orleans named Antoine Amedie Peychaud, the creator of Peychaud's bitters. It was said that he would close up shop and invite friends, for whom he would mix brandy and bitters in a small mixing vessel called a coquetier. If you say it fast, it kind of, sort of sounds right-ish.
This one’s been disproven anyway, as he was about fifty years too late.

While people will believe what they choose to believe, common wisdom points to one logical explanation.

At the turn of the 19th century, anyone who was considered a man of particular character or influence, or part of the “sporting set”, as it were, went to the horse races.

These were the trendsetters, the politicians, the dignitaries, the financiers and the merchants. The fastest horses of the day were mixed-breed. In honor of their favorite horses, they took mixed drinks while at the races. These mixed-breed horses were known as bob-tails, cocked-tails or cocktails, due to the fact that their tails were cut high. As these men carried great measure, many who strived to emulate them adopted what they drank. Voila! A star is born. Now to be fair, this is also the story we like best. It was also widely known at the turn of the 19th century that the tap on a bottle of spirits was referred to as a cock (spirits in most bars were sold straight from the barrel) and the dregs at the bottom of said vessel were known as the tails. In many fine establishments, when the cock was opened and the tails poured out, they were so nasty that they were mixed in order to be palatable and were usually sold at a deep discount.

We are painfully aware now that any mixed alcoholic beverage is referred to as a cocktail. It’s not known precisely when or how this transition took place. Although several fancier names came into play as years progressed, they were always followed by the word cocktail, e.g. Saratoga Cocktail, Japanese Cocktail, Martinez Cocktail, Manhattan Cocktail. It was most likely rather gradual and probably started shortly after Prohibition with the rise of “Cocktail Bar”, “Cocktail Lounge” and “Cocktail Room”.

The Professor

By the 1850’s, Americans had infiltrated most of the nation. As we moved into the mid-west, the plains states and California, hotels, restaurants and saloons sprang up and along with them an ever-growing thirst for mixed drinks. Barman around the country had ready access to block ice, affordable citrus, local berries, apples and other produce, and the railroad brought exotic spices and ingredients from very foreign places, as well as top quality spirits. These guys did not, obviously, have the ability to pick up the phone and order syrups and sodas from their local vendors. In fact, every single thing they used behind their bars was made in house. The ice was hand-hewn. Proprietary bitters of all types were made on premise. Every fruit syrup, sugar syrup, spice tincture, common wines and ales, ginger beers, etc. The life of barman was quite different than it is today. These men worked all day long just to prep for an evening’s service, then took care of the books, received deliveries and cooked much of the food to be served. After that, they donned their aprons, took their places behind the bar and held court.

In cities like New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Denver and San Francisco, bartenders became legendary. Their recipes, stories and general bon vivance were well chronicled by journalists all over the country. Barman were celebrated and held the same esteem as doctors and lawyers and politicians. In fact it was very common for tavern owners and head bartenders to hold local political offices.

In 1862 “Professor” Jerry Thomas published the first real book devoted to the art of the bartender. It was titled, The Bon Vivant’s Companion. In it, he detailed recipes for 236 different drinks, including cocktails, punches, crustas, the Blue Blazer, the champagne cocktail and many others. He also devoted sections to the creation of syrups, cordials, liqueurs, tinctures, rataffias and wines, and throughout he provided notes on proper service and hospitality. In 1876 he published a second edition of the same book, this time culling recipes from some of the best known American bartenders of the day. There were improved versions of many cocktails. The daisy and fizz were introduced, and the Tom and Jerry was immortalized. Finally in 1887, a third edition was printed, two years after Thomas’s death. The last iteration sees a new quaff introduced - vermouth and mentions several recipes that use it, including the “Martinez”- the precursor to the Martini and the “Manhattan Cocktail”. Thomas was a larger than life personality and a true showman. He adorned himself with a diamond stickpin and gold and silver rings and traveled with a bar kit made of solid silver. He was an avid gambler and legendary raconteur. He worked in bars all over the country, from San Francisco to Nevada to South Carolina and finished his career as the owner of a small bar in downtown Manhattan. He also spent time traveling through Europe, honing his craft in opulent hotels. Some credit the “Professor” with the invention of both the Martini and the Manhattan but research has proven otherwise.

Although he died over a hundred years ago, Jerry Thomas is considered the father of modern mixology. His recipes and techniques have been faithfully adopted by many of today’s top bartenders and his influence on the return of craft and nobility to the bar world is indisputable. All one has to do is go to
Manhattan & Martini

Arguably our nation’s two best known cocktails to date are the Manhattan and the Martini. While everyone knows the Old-Fashioned, the Whiskey Sour and the julep, they don’t conjure the same iconic notions. Every bartender in America knows a recipe (maybe not the correct one) for a dry Martini and a Manhattan. What they probably don’t know is that those recipes are well over 100 years old.

Martinez-Martini Connection

Just like the cocktail itself, there are a dozen or so theories as to the creation of the Martini. Some offer that it was invented by Jerry Thomas at the Occidental Hotel in San Francisco for a road weary traveler headed to Martinez, California, sometime in the late 1860’s. Others say a bartender in Martinez, California created it for a man who was traveling to San Francisco at roughly the same time. Another tells that an Italian ex-pat living in New York developed it for John D. Rockefeller at the hotel Knickerbocker. The barman in question’s name was Martini di Arma di Taggia. Unfortunately this one has no teeth, as the Martini had been showing up in printed materials for over twenty years by the time di Taggia came to the Big Apple.

Regardless of its birthplace what we know as the Martini started as the Martinez, which was a mix of equal parts Old Tom gin and sweet vermouth, yes sweet vermouth. To that was added a dash of maraschino liqueur and a couple of dash of orange bitters- a cocktail very popular and widely available around the country by the mid 1880’s. As tastes began to change and dry vermouth became more readily imported, by 1895 we saw the first printed record of the Dry Martini, which contained equal parts Old Tom and dry vermouth with a splash of orange bitters. Ultimately London dry gin came into favor, the bitters became an olive, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Martinez-Manhattan Connection

The Manhattan is the first American classic for which we have rock-solid, indisputable, utterly unchallengeable, concrete evidence as to its beginnings. It was invented by Winston Churchill’s mother, Jennie Jerome in 1874. It was created at the Manhattan Club to honor the election of Samuel J. Tilden as governor of New York. If it weren’t for the fact that Jennie Jerome was in England giving birth to Mr. Churchill at the time and hadn’t been in New York for over a decade, all would be well and good. No, much like most great cocktails, we have no proof as to the Manhattan’s creation. What we do know is that the Manhattan Club did lay claim to the invention of the drink and did serve one. It was a mix of equal parts rye whiskey and Italian red vermouth, with a splash of orange bitters. Ultimately London dry gin came into favor, the bitters became an olive, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Turning of the 20th

By the turn of the 20th century, cocktails and other mixed drinks were an ingrained part of the American culture. By 1900, we had the Martini, Manhattan, Tom Collins, Gin Fizz, Whiskey Sour, Champagne Cocktail, Mint Julep, several variations on the Highball, the Jack Rose, and a fairly new addition - the Old Fashioned. Note: this was not the version we know today but was simply whiskey, sugar, water and bitters with a lemon twist, served on ice. The mess of muddled fruit came a little later to please grandmothers on a bender.
By 1915 a slew of new barmen and their drinks had come into fashion. George Kappeler, possible inventor of the Old-Fashion, had the Bosom Caresser, the Brain Duster and the Electric Current Fizz. New York bartender P.G. Duffy and the Aviation, a cocktail that, as most of us know, has rocketed back to popularity in recent years. Somewhere right about the same time we adopt a European cousin, the Negroni.

This was purportedly drummed up by a count named Camillo Negroni at Bar Casoni in Florence. Negroni had traveled extensively throughout the American West as a cowboy and spent time as a gambler in New York. When he returned to Italy, he had developed a taste for mixed drinks and came up with his mix of equal parts dry gin, Campari and sweet vermouth. He took his on the rocks with an orange slice. 

**Prohibition**

The Noble Experiment. All was going well for American tipplers. Bars and cocktails were in full swing. People were happy, money was being made.

Unfortunately, there was a movement to put an end to all the fun. Actually the “temperance” movement got its start in the early part of the 19th Century and grew slowly until the late 1800’s. Temperance was initially dedicated to just that. Not abstinence, but moderation. Most practitioners of temperance advocated moderation in drinking so as to avoid the dangerous and socially disruptive affects. Many encouraged drinking only beer or wine. As the 20th century dawned, however, the temperance movement took a much stronger tack, seeing that their approach was not yielding the desired results. America was drunk. Temperance was redefined to mean complete and total abstinence from alcohol, and by 1915 the Movement saw dramatic success. Nearly half of American states were “dry”. The First World War brought more ammunition to the cause, as the Teetotalers argued that grapes and grains should be saved for food consumption and not be used for unproductive purposes like alcohol production.

The Volstead Act went into force on January 16th, 1920. Prohibition, aka The Great Drought, aka The Noble experiment, went into effect, and the American cocktail movement came to a grinding halt. Now this is not to say that Americans didn’t get their drink on. Quite the contrary, the thirteen years of the Noble Flop saw a monumental rise in binge drinking. People were quaffing whatever they could get their hands at phenomenal rates. Unfortunately, the stuff was mostly rotgut swill. H.L. Mencken wrote of the quality of spirits served at nearly all speakeasies, “rye whiskey in which rats have drowned, bourbon contaminated with arsenic and ptomaine, corn fresh from the still, gin that is three fourths turpentine, and rum rejected as too corrosive by the West Indian embalmers”.

Speakeasies flourished in every city and small town around the nation. Hooch was being smuggled in massive quantities and homemade bathtub gin saw its heyday. Cocktails throughout Prohibition consisted of fruit juice and sugar in copious amounts, enough to mask the sting of bad booze, and speakeasy bartenders were generally guys off the street who had no prior experience in mixing up drinks, and mixology, as we know it, went the way of the dodo. Actually that’s not entirely true - it went east. The great American bartenders, whose craft and tradition could not be practiced or appreciated stateside, went elsewhere to ply their trade. London, Paris, Stockholm, Havana.

Cocktail geeks who had a bit of disposable income and the ability to travel frequently to Mexico, primarily Hollywood actors and musicians, found themselves in Tijuana, drinking daisies made with a savage liquor called tequila. Those in the North headed to Canada and got their fill of Manhattans and other cocktails made with rather innocuous Canadian blended whiskey.

**Repeal**

When Repeal came on December 5th, 1933, millions cheered. They could legally imbibe again, thanks in large part to the efforts of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Thanks were given also to many reformed temperance advocates who basically begged for repeal to stop Americans from drinking so damn much. Sadly, it wasn’t so easy to return to a culture of great cocktails and civilized drinking. The bartenders of note were gone and wouldn’t return for a few years. The ones that were around were the guys working the “speaks” who only knew to throw in a bunch of sweetened juice or cream to mask bad liquor. What to do to hedge the bets? Sour mix. Yes, mass-produced, artificially flavored sweet and sour mix came into being just after Repeal to make the bartender’s job easy. Just pour some badly made gin and load it with mix and you’ve got a drink. And the good spirits wouldn’t return immediately either. It takes time to make whiskey.
Another bittersweet note to Prohibition’s end, one that we in the spirits industry deal with to this day, was the compromise that had to be made in order for the 21st Amendment to be ratified. It mandated that every state, county, municipality and even town would be put in charge of its own liquor laws. We all know how successful that has been.

The War and Peace
The late 30’s into the early forties were a sort of ambiguous time for American mixology. Many people had taken to drinking whisky, usually Scotch or Canadian, straight or on the rocks. There were cocktails being served in great profusion, but they were products of a bygone era. The Manhattan and Dry Martini, both now being served with a fraction of the vermouth of the originals, were the order of the day, as was the Old-Fashioned, this time it was a Grandma’s fruit cup. We did see the Sidecar achieve some popularity, a blend of cognac, Cointreau and lemon juice, which was created in France during the Great War. Also making strides was the Daiquiri, a mix of rum, lime juice and sugar. These would prove to be valuable bases to the mixologist’s craft. Swap out the cognac or rum, respectively, for tequila, and you’ve got the rough approximation of a margarita.

The forties and fifties saw places like New York’s Stork Club and the Waldorf-Astoria catering to the well heeled who drank extra dry Martinis. Hollywood mirrored the mentality, getting the jet-setting studio set sauced on 5 to 1’s or 7 to 1’s at places like the Brown Derby. Vermouth became a side note, the stuff of long-running anecdotes, i.e. Place vermouth on windowsill and allow sun to shine through, or pass bottle over shaker of gin. Winston Churchill, a connoisseur of the bone dry Martini was said to forsake the vermouth altogether and simply salute in the general direction of France.

Shortly before WWII, an entirely different drinking phenomenon was taking root in the U.S.- the Tiki Revolution. During Prohibition, those who could afford to travel for boozy purpose would often find themselves taking rum cruises through the Caribbean or back and forth to Cuba. A taste for the island spirit was born, and to capitalize on it, a plethora of Hawaiian or Cuban-inspired restaurants started springing up. As the war progressed and sailors started returning from the South Pacific, more and more of these “Tiki” rooms appeared and became wildly popular. Pupu platters, Scorpion bowls and bad eukele music was a recipe for success.

Two men are credited with launching the tiki craze- Donn Beach (a.k.a. Donn the Beachcomber) and Trader Vic Bergeron. Their respective empires grew legendary and tremendously successful. By the 1950’s, folks were drinking Mai Tai’s and Zombies in every city in the country. New York, Chicago, Minnesota, Southern California, these places were literally everywhere. This pseudo-Polynesian model would thrive well into the sixties, dwindling in the seventies to mere handfuls of joints. There are a few Trader Vic’s in existence today. Sadly mere relics of what they once were.

The interesting thing to note is that from a mixology perspective, tiki bars were very progressive. While we equate tropical drinks today to neon blue or green, artificially flavored headaches in a hurricane glass, the real essence of Tiki was markedly different. Cocktails were made specifically to complement the flavor profiles of certain rums, all fruit juices were fresh squeezed daily. Exotic liqueurs from all over the world were used in abundance, and things like absinthe and Chartreuse were added to give complexity to drinks. Beach, Bergeron and the others that followed suit, all made their own proprietary syrups from spices, nuts and fruit and kept their recipes as highly guarded secrets. So much so that even their own bartenders weren’t allowed to know the recipes, for fear that they might take them to a competing restaurant.

The ironic thing to note about tiki is that it has absolutely nothing at all to do with Hawaii, Tahiti or any other part of the South Pacific. It’s an entirely American made concept. In fact, at its height, restaurants had to be built in Hawaii because so many American tourists were vacationing there and coming back disappointed that they couldn’t find any tiki rooms. You’ll be hard pressed to find a decent Mai Tai in Tahiti, speaking from personal experience. A point of interest - the majority of tiki bartenders were of Filipino decent. Beach and friends wanted to hire “authentic” looking staff, and in the 40’s and 50’s there was a huge migration of Filipino men who came to the States looking for work.

Because of the range of exotic flavors employed in the original tiki drinks and based on the craft, technique and noble tradition of the early barmen, modern mixologists have taken to re-introducing real tiki drinks into their repertoires. London leads the pack but many New York and San Francisco bartenders are slinging Mai Tai variations once again.
Bond, the Space Race & Hippies

The 50’s. Not much need be said, other than vodka. As far as cocktails go, it was the thing. Yes, Americans threw back plenty of gin and tonic, scotch and soda and the Manhattans. We also saw the beginnings of the after dinner cocktails like the Grasshopper and the Stinger. But the Screwdriver, the Moscow Mule, the Bloody Mary and the Vodkatini ruled the day. This was thanks in large part to a certain fictional spy who, in 1953’s Casino Royale, ordered a martini with three measures of Gordon’s gin, one of vodka and half a measure of Kina Lillet, shaken with a lemon peel.

The 60’s. More vodka. And good whiskey went out the window. Blended whiskey became more and more popular, as it was much lighter in flavor than scotch, or even Irish whiskey. Gin began to lose to the stranglehold of vodka by the middle of the decade - again because it was lighter in flavor. Seems drinking became more about the destination and less about the journey. It makes perfect sense when you consider the general tenor of the nation at the time. Technology had been booming since the end of WWII. We were solidly immersed in the space race. We became a society of convenience- TV dinners, plastic, Tang, cocktails in a can.

The 70’s were more of the same. Vodka championed bourbon in 1974 to become the number one selling spirit in the country. Vodka martinis were the standard fare, and at this point the vermouth rarely left the bartender’s well. Drinks like the Harvey Wallbanger, a glorified Screwdriver, were very popular, created by Galliano as a marketing ploy. The cocktail scene was virtually flatlining. We were consumed by the Viet Nam conflict and were in financial turmoil. More people were interested in catching their buzz through synthetic or psychotropic means than by a well-made libation.

There was one saving grace. During the late sixties and through the seventies, those who were fond of something a little different, or those who like something tasty to binge on, were drinking a beverage that came to the country shortly after Prohibition. The Margarita had come back to the U.S. with the bartenders who had stationed themselves in Tijuana during the Drought. While it didn’t really catch on for several decades, it was around. Remember we mentioned the tequila daisy? If you speak any Spanish, you’ll know that margarita is the name for that particular flower. The original recipe called for tequila, Cointreau or triple sec and fresh lime juice. What was being passed off as a margarita in the 60’s and 70’s was full of artificial sweet and sour mix and sometimes grain alcohol in place of agave spirit! Sadly some of the big-box Mexican chains and sports bars out there still make them this way. It did, however, open the door for 100% blue agave tequila to become more and more popular, and ultimately has led to mixologists having the ability to return to the original recipe for appreciative audiences.

Rainbow Room & Celebrity Chefs

Sometime during the 1980’s the drinking paradigm shifted in a good direction. We can’t be certain exactly how or why, as it was a fairly gradual one. This was the decade that brought Wolfgang Puck, Alice Waters and other celebrity chefs doing California cuisine. People got into food again. We also started to drink and appreciate good wine. Basically we embraced flavor. It would follow that we were looking for that expressiveness in mixed drinks as well. We do know that by the end of the decade people were starting to drink cocktails again. Martinis actually saw some gin and some vermouth, to boot. Bartenders were trolling cocktail books and pulling out other American “classic” drink recipes. They were selecting higher quality spirits with which to fashion those cocktails. Fresh lemons and limes got squeezed at hotel bars and supper clubs.

The place that set the standard and probably turned the tide of mixology in the country toward where we are now was the Rainbow Room. It’s proprietor, Joe Baum, was a legendary restaurateur and an affable host with an unbending passion to give his guests quality and memorable experiences. He was a showman and knew that watching a bartender expertly create a drink in front of them, cutting fresh melons, shaking feverishly, would add value and keep them coming back. He had also come up in the industry in a time when well-crafted cocktails were in vogue and wanted to see a return to that era, partly for nostalgia’s sake.

He hired a young bartender named Dale DeGroff and charged him with rebuilding the bar program to produce true classic cocktails, using only fresh ingredients. Although Dale had never worked in that sort of environment himself, he embraced the task and set about researching antiquated recipes. While there were growing pains associated with throwing convenience out the window and basically re-learning how to tend a bar, his efforts proved wildly successful. He brought craft and pride and nobility back to the profession of bartending, and the Rainbow Room’s cocktail program became famous. To this day, he is the world’s most sought after and recognizable bartender - sort of the modern-day Jerry Thomas.
Many people credit DeGroff with the invention of the Cosmopolitan. While any bartender would be thrilled to have such a legacy, he’ll be the first to admit he did not create it. But he will tell you that he made it better.

**Tools of the Trade**

As with most craft or trade people, mixologists have a variety of tools to which they need to get acquainted. While they are simple implements to use, they all take some measure of practice to master. This section will serve as a guide to the basic bar kit and tips on effective utilization.

**Palate**

The most valuable tool in a mixologist’s arsenal sits squarely between his eyes and his chin. In order to successfully mix ingredients to create a balanced and delicious cocktail, one must know how each ingredient tastes on its own. When it comes to spirits, we need to identify similarities and differences between those in a category, e.g., while G’Vine and Death’s Door both fall under the category gin, they are remarkably different from one another in taste profile. They are also both tremendously different from a typical London dry gin like Tanqueray. Just because a certain cocktail calls for gin doesn’t mean we can drop a jigger of any brand into the mix to achieve the desired result. We have to be aware of the other ingredients in the cocktail and think about which mark would best suit the balance of the overall drink. When starting to make drinks, whether time-tested or original, think about them as one cumulative flavor rather than parts of a whole. You’ll create much more integrated cocktails this way. And trust your palette, but test it. If you’re eating a Nicoise salad, for example, think about the flavors you’re experiencing and try to, from sense memory, imagine what flavors would best complement it in a cocktail.

**Shaker**

Two types are generally used. The Cobbler shaker is comprised of three pieces: the mixing cup, the fitted perforated strainer and lid. This is preferred by most home bartenders but is not as widely used in bars. Although they come in all shapes and sizes and are pretty sexy, they tend to be hard to open when very cold. In a pinch the strainer can be inverted and used to catch seeds and some pulp from freshly squeezed citrus juice. The Boston shaker is a set that consists of a large metal mixing tin, usually 28 or 32 oz., and a pint-sized mixing glass- this is favored by bartenders because they are easy to seal and open, and they are stackable. Many bartenders will use a smaller metal tin in lieu of the mixing glass, as it is more durable, easier to handle and can produce a colder drink faster.

**Mixing Glass**

Generally 14 to 16 oz. glass - the standard pint beer glass. Aside from its use as one half of the Boston Shaker, the mixing glass is used to build any cocktail that needs to be stirred, i.e. Martini, Manhattan, Negroni. A general rule of thumb is that if a cocktail contains only spirit and/or liqueurs it should be stirred to produce less air and create more viscosity. Mixing glasses are also good for the novice mixologist because they allow the liquid contents to be seen. It is good practice for determining volume and ratio.

**Jigger**

A jigger is an actual unit of measure equivalent to 1.5 liquid ounces. The bartender’s jigger is used to measure volume of spirits and other liquid ingredients; however, they come in different sizes and don’t necessarily correlate to the standard measure. Generally a jigger is two different conical measures stacked on top of each other in an hourglass fashion. Common jiggers have a 1.5 oz. measure one on side and .75 oz. on the other, or 2 oz. and 1 oz. Some will have 1 oz. and .5 oz. It’s essential to have jiggers of different sizes in a bar kit, as you’ll have to deal with many different measures for different applications. Jiggers are very important to good mixology. With most cocktails, estimating will not make a great drink. Until one is comfortable with free pouring using a pour top and counting method, a jigger must be used. Jiggers take practice. Filling an empty spirit bottle with water is the best method. Tippling Bros will gladly hold on to the spirits for you while you practice.

**Strainer**

Strainers come in two basic types, the Hawthorne and the Julep. The Hawthorne strainer has two or four prongs and a coiled metal spring. It’s made to fit the top of most metal mixing tins. The Julep strainer is shaped like a perforated shallow bowl with a handle. It’s made to fit a mixing glass. A julep strainer also doubles nicely as an ice scoop and will strain fresh juice like the top of a cobbler shaker.
Barspoon
An invaluable tool. A barspoon is usually a long spoon, 10 or 11 inches, with a teaspoon measure and a fluted handle. The flutes are traditional to assist in twirling the spoon around the glass. The generic versions have a red plastic cap on the pointed end. This is supposed to be able to muddle but is really put there so a frenzied bartender won’t put his eye out. Bar spoons are used to stir cocktails and measure sugar, small amounts of spirits and liqueurs and syrups. The back of the spoon bowl is an effective tool for cracking ice and knuckles. The bowl can also be used to muddle herbs, in a pinch.

Muddler
The muddler is a long stick, generally made of wood, stainless steel or some sort of plastic. They come in a variety of sizes but should be at least 8 to 10 inches. Muddlers are used to pulverize fruit, bruise herbs and create a paste from granulate sugar and water or juice. The generic varnished muddlers should never be used. Varnish comes off during use. Take a guess where it goes. When muddling citrus enough pressure needs to be used to extract the juice but not so much that the skin is mashed, as it will release bitter oils. When muddling herbs, like mint for a mojito, only very gentle pressure is required. The aim is to break the veins in the leaf, releasing the oils. The aim is not to puree the herbs into minute particles. Also most herbs will turn black and bitter if over-muddled.

Channel Knife
This is a tool with one purpose. It’s used to cut fruit peels into long thin ribbons- it’s small shovel-shaped blade is meant to be pulled through the skin without remove the bitter pith.

Citrus Juicer
The hand-held lemon and lime squeezer are invaluable tools for the mixologist, making it a snap to quickly extract juice without getting seeds in the drink or juice all over the hands. They are generally made of cast metal and look like two ice cream scoops hinged together with a metal pin. There are versions made for limes, lemons and oranges. The halved fruit goes into the bowl of the squeezer upside down, meaning it should not fit the shape of the bowl. The top handle is then pressed with the other hand quickly and with purpose, pushing the juice through perforations in the bowl and into the mixing tin. Do not press the life out of the fruit, or else the bitterness of the shin and pith will wind up in the drink.

An important note: Never juice cold fruit! You will get 30% less juice than you will from fruit that is at room temperature. If in a bind put the citrus in a pot of hot water for ten to fifteen minutes, or pop in the microwave for ten seconds. It seems that many bartenders do not know this. By sharing this trick with them, you’ll be making their jobs easier and saving your account potentially thousands of dollars over the course of a year.

Simple Syrup
Okay, okay. So simple syrup is an ingredient, rather than a tool. This is true, but it’s something that a mixologist will reach for very often and needs to be thought of as an implement for constructing many great cocktails. A dash of simple can brighten up a drink that’s not quite balanced. Sugar and water are both flavor enhancers and will smooth out a beverage with rough edges. To make basic 1 to 1 ration simple syrup, all one needs is some superfine sugar, warm water and a bottle with a tight seal. Add equal parts to the bottle, seal and shake feverishly for a minute or so. Let it rest for a minute, then repeat the shaking. Voila! Let it cool to room temperature, and it’s good to go. Simple syrup can be kept almost indefinitely if properly sealed and refrigerated. We always recommend a squeeze bottle as the storage vessel. It makes using much less messy. Always start with adding simple to a cocktail in small increments, between .25 and .50 oz.

The Techniques
There are many techniques that a mixologist needs to become adept at in order to craft good drinks. This section will touch on the basics. Creating foams, airs, gelees, spherifications and setting things on fire will be covered in the forthcoming appendix. Practice makes perfect, and if we want our account bartenders to listen to us, show us some respect and buy our products, we must show them that we can walk the walk.

Stirring
Not as simple as it sounds. Stirring a cocktail takes a bit of coordination. The easiest method is to hold the spoon like a pencil or chopstick and use the flutes to help rotate it around the glass. Ice is important.
The mixing glass should be 2/3 full of ice. Generally, it’s most effective to stir in one direction, as this will get a rhythm going. A good cocktail should be stirred for about fifteen to twenty seconds to ensure that it’s properly chilled, mixed and diluted.

**Shaking**
The style factor. Shaking is cool. We shake a drink when it calls for any ingredient other than just spirit or liqueur, or simple syrup. If a cocktail contains fruit juice, cream or other ingredients it should be shaken. Unlike the stirred cocktail, we want to incorporate a good deal of air into a shaken drink, to make it light and sparkling on the palate. We also want to chill it and mix the ingredients thoroughly. And we want to dilute it. A good cocktail, whether shaken or stirred should include 25-30% water. This is very important. Water will soften the spirits, integrate the flavors and allow more subtle nuances to show through the cocktail. A drink that is not sufficiently diluted will be harsh in the mouth. Conversely, one that is overly diluted will be thin and insipid.

The mixing tin should be filled 2/3 with ice. Whether using a cobbler or Boston, be sure that a tight seal is made. When using a Boston, this is accomplished by wrapping on the top, (or the bottom) of the mixing glass, with the heel of your hand. Shake like a piston for about ten seconds. Don't be shy, shake it. As famed 1930’s bartender, Harry Craddock said, “you’re trying to wake it up, not rock it to sleep”. Always shake away from other people. When the shaking has ceased, the seal must be broken. When using a cobbler, simply pulling off the cap will achieve this. When using a Boston, hold the shaker firmly in one hand with two fingers over the glass and two over the metal (kind of like you would hold a football). With the heel of your other hand firmly rap where the metal and glass meet. This should separate the two. Don't be shy. It takes a lot of force to break a pint glass.

**Muddling**
Remember gentle pressure for herbs. The idea is to just bruise enough to release the natural oils. Citrus needs enough pressure to extract juice. Avoid muddling citrus too long or too hard, as this will release unpleasant bitterness from the pith and skin. When making a mojito, try muddling the limes first, then add the mint and briefly muddle both. Hard fruits, berries and vegetable - have at it! To get the most out of your muddler, place the palm over the top and wrap your fingers around, using downward pressure, like driving a stick-shift.

**Jiggering**
Jiggers require a bit of finesse to be used properly. It’s best to practice with water several times in order to get comfortable with the technique and the different size pours. When using the standard conical shaped jigger the liquid must reach the very top of the measure to be a full pour. The jigger should be held a few inches above the mixing glass or tin, just slightly off center. When the jigger is full and ready to be dumped into the shaker, use one swift motion, quickly inverting the wrist.

**Free Pouring**
Free pouring is the practice of adding alcohol to a drink without using concise measurement. It relies on the mixologist’s skill of measuring either by eyesight or through a metered counting process. Almost always a pour spout will be utilized, enabling a “consistent” stream of liquid to pass from the bottle. Free pouring takes a lot of practice.

When free pouring the bottle must be completely inverted as quickly as possible in order for air, liquid and gravity to work in conjunction. The bottle must be held securely around the neck with the forefinger wrapped over the pour spout, as they do not always fit snugly and have been known to pop out. A counting method is used to determine the volume of alcohol as it pours. Most mixologists will use a slow three count, think Mississippi’s or a quicker four count to determine one ounce. Then it’s up or down from there. If you find you must free pour, use a mixing glass and a jigger first. Pour different volumes into the glass to see the level. Then remember the visual when pouring freely.

**Juicing**
The hand squeezer, as mentioned earlier, is a must-have tool for the mixologist but may be inadequate for producing large volumes of juice. Pretty decent, relatively inexpensive electric juicers can be purchased at places like Target, Bed, Bath and Beyond, etc. Williams-Sonoma and similar kitchen stores will carry more expensive and more durable versions.

If you are prone to sensitive skin, invest in some vinyl kitchen gloves when juicing. Citrus juice does tend to irritate and extended juicing will cause the skin to turn brown temporarily.
Do no keep lemon or lime juice overnight. They will both oxidize very quickly. Throw it out and juice more. We want the freshest possible ingredients, right? When dealing with accounts who may be just starting to incorporate fresh juices, the rule of thumb is:

-Lime juice is good for one full day, if properly refrigerated.
-Lemon juice is good for a day and a half (3 full shifts) if properly refrigerated.
-Orange & Grapefruit juices are less volatile and can last up to 3 days if properly stored.

How to Build a Drink
In order to begin the process of drinks construction, one must recognize the fundamentals of what makes a cocktail great. As in wine, as in food and as in life, balance is key. We all know that our favorite wines, those that stimulate every part of our palate and leave us wanting more, are those that are perfectly balanced. In wine, roughly, we look for the relationship between acid and tannins, fruit and alcohol.

Balance in cocktail hinges on basically the same components. All cocktails will have acidity. While some, but not all, will exhibit tannic qualities, all will have some measure of astringency, which works like tannin to dry the mouth. The fruit component of a wine is reflected in the sugar element of a cocktail. This can be the natural sweetness of the spirit, a liqueur, a syrup, fruit juice, etc. And, by definition, a cocktail's got to have alcohol. Even a properly made vodka martini will have these profiles in balance.

When we start to practice more advanced mixology, incorporating vegetables, oils, fresh or dried herbs and spices, etc., we have to always bear that balance in mind. If I’m going to riff on a Cosmopolitan and, let’s say, add some sage and muddled orange, I need to be sure that I can build a basic Cosmo first and get that balance right. I then have to be aware as to what the sage is going to do to shift that balance and adjust accordingly. What will the orange do? Will I need to back down on the Cointreau or the lime juice? Will muddling the orange add to much bitterness in combination with the cranberry and sage?

If I’m making a Manhattan, and I choose to use rye whiskey, I must know that it’s going to be spicier and less sweet than if I use a bourbon. Depending on the type of vermouth I’m using, I’m going to use probably a bit more than I would to balance out the spice and the sweetness.

Bitters
Bitters are a mixologist’s best friend. They are to building good drinks what good salt and fresh pepper are to creating a perfect dish. They are meant to add complexity and spice and are used as drink finishers. A couple of dash in nearly any drink will bring it to life. There is such a wide profusion of bitters on the market today that the flavor combinations are nearly endless. A Tom Collins with a dash or two of cherry bitters is almost as delicious as a Margarita finished with grapefruit bitters, or vice versa.

When using bitters, it’s best to construct the drink first and taste it as is, then add a dash and stir it in. Taste that and see what it’s done. Add a second dash, stir and taste. It can be somewhat remarkable.

The Build Out
When starting to play with cocktails, follow this model and you’ll develop great habits. You’ll also waste a lot less booze.

Start with a clean mixing glass. Begin adding the ingredients in order from least expensive to most. If using lemon or lime juice, add that first. Follow with your sweetener, whether it be cinnamon syrup or Dimmi. Even if using a pricey liqueur, you’ll generally be adding less. Then continue with your spirit. If the cocktail calls for spirits only, e.g. a Manhattan variation with .25 oz. of Averna and .50 oz. LBV port, start with the vermouth, then add the Averna, the port and the whiskey last. In these models if I actually spill in too much syrup or citrus, etc., I can throw it out and start over without wasting expensive spirits.

Watch the levels in the mixing glass as more ingredients are added. Soon enough you’ll get a feel for determining when the volume is right.

Ice should be added last. If a drink is built over ice, and the mixologist is fumbling around looking for ingredients for thirty seconds, the end result can wind up being overly diluted. Most cocktails, even
those served on the rocks benefit from being made in the mixing glass or tin and being strained over fresh ice. Exceptions are mojito and caipirinha style drinks.

In the Mix
Garnishes are similar to bitters. They finish a drink. What it’s interesting about the garnish is that it can provide an aromatic, a flavorful or a visual top note to a cocktail. Good ones will combine all three. A plastic monkey swinging from a palm tree is fun and has its place, but in the mixologist’s world, not so much. That being said, if we owned a full-blown Tiki bar there would be parrots, umbrellas and little hula girls on every glass.

Garnishes should be relevant to the drink and provide a clue as to what is in the glass. While a fat lemon twist floating on top of an elixir of gin and sweet vermouth isn’t telling the drinker that the glass is full of lemon juice, it’s providing a visual clue that the cocktail is going to be full and spirituous. As soon as the glass is brought to the lips, the nose is filled with a sweet, floral perfume and tells the brain to expect something pretty cool. If I’m crafting a Macchu Pisco Sour with fresh strawberries muddled into it, my garnish should be a simple strawberry slice or a lime wheel. There would be no reason to float raspberries on top. A traditional Sidecar has its glass rimmed with sugar. It’s visually pretty AND provides an added element to the drink. The original recipe was made a bit on the sour side, so that the sugar cut it when it hit the mouth.

Tippling Bros. always say, “as long as you stay true to the roots, don’t be afraid to color outside the lines”. Get creative with garnishes, as long as they compliment the cocktail.

The best way to begin a career in mixology is to take a step backward. The most valuable information for our forward progress lies in the pages of recipe books from times past. Several companies have faithfully reprinted the original versions of tomes from Jerry Thomas, Harry Craddock, David Embury, Harry Johnson and other greats. Guys like Dale DeGroff, Gary Regan and Jeff Berry have written several books compiling the classics in combination with updated riffs and newer cocktails. Pick up some books and start having fun. A true mixologist will pay homage to the great barmen and recipes that came before. And if you go into an account knowing the history and recipe for a Bee’s Knees cocktail, your stock will go way up.

With the advance in technology related to the internet, thousands upon thousands of recipes are at your disposal, not only the classics but those of contemporary mixologists. Don’t be afraid to use them. Filching is fairly commonplace in the industry. Check out sites like www.cocktaildb.com, www.drinkboy.com, et al. For a great resource into procuring reprinted cocktail tomes, look up www.mudpuddlebooks.com.

Now, when you’ve decided you want to foray into inventing your own signature libations, remember this: it’s probably been done before. Most of the cocktails that are being created by leading mixologists around the world are variations of some sort on classic models. Very few people have re-invented any wheels. Even in terms of molecular mixology, wherein science is used to turn liquid into solids, make drinks hot and cold at the same time or infuse alcohol into food, we are really just riffing on classics and presenting new ways to deliver the same flavors.

Following are a handful of mixological techniques to guide you on the journey to becoming a bona fide craft cocktail maker. Remember, however, the mixologist’s most important tool - the palette. We all love to eat. We know what we like. We know what works together and what doesn’t. Use what you know, and start to think like a chef.

Substitution - this can be very simple or more complex and is the basis for most modern drinks. The Daiquiri, 1.5 oz. White rum, .75 oz. Simple simple, 1 oz. of fresh lime becomes a Gimlet if you substitute gin for rum. Add whiskey instead of gin and lemon instead of lime, and you’ve got a Whiskey Sour. Use tequila in place of the whiskey and put the lime back in, splash in some orange liqueur, and you have a Margarita. Sub vodka in for the tequila and add a generous splash of cranberry juice, and a Cosmo is born. Grappa for pisco, sure. Substitutions can be made for any constituent of a cocktail- dry Sherry, sake or Lillet Blonde can be a unique alternative to dry vermouth; maybe a splash of PX in place of sweet vermouth. When substituting, try to keep body, alcohol and sweetness roughly equivalent. Generally speaking use a white spirit in place of another white, and brown for brown.
Scale and Temperature - very simply, scale refers to the volume of certain ingredients in a cocktail. It can be adjusted by adding more or less - 1.5 oz. of liqueur vs. .75 oz., 2 oz. of blood orange juice vs. a splash. Scale also refers to the overall volume of a drink. A mojito can be a cool cocktail when strained into an “up” glass and the soda is omitted, or take the rye Manhattan and serve it in a long glass with some ginger beer.

Temperature can do interesting things to a cocktail. Heat will release more flavors and volatility in a drink that’s normally served cold. A Castarede Sidecar can be delicious with the addition of some boiling water and a bit of extra sugar, served in an Irish Coffee glass. Conversely the Irish Coffee can become a very refreshing and decadent cocktail when shaken over ice and strained into a coupe.

Addition - no math required. A couple of drops of Averna Sambuca to a Tuthilltown Sazerac. Some Thai basil to a Floraison gimlet. Fresh blueberries muddled into A J.M Mai Tai.

Curiosity - although it has killed the cat, it has only thwarted the mixologist from time to time. “What if I added this to that”? Release your inner mad scientist. As terrible a drink as the Long Island Iced Tea is, it works.

The Bottom Line
Drinking is a pleasure. It is supposed to be fun. It is not supposed to be a cerebral exercise. Far too many mixologists get caught up in complexity and intellectualizing cocktails. We all need to remember that we go to bars for new experiences and to escape the humdrum of every day life. On that note, when constructing cocktails, keep your creations simple, and use them to exemplify our exceptional portfolio of spirits.
About Classic & Vintage Artisanal Spirits Collection
The “Classic & Vintage” idea was born from our constant allegiance to character, diversity, expression and tradition. Since the inception of Domaine Select Wine Spirits more than a decade ago our commitment to these four qualities has not faltered. We believe that these qualities represent the foundation of wine & specialty spirits as a true form of culture and of the enjoyment of life.

Classic & Vintage Artisanal Spirits was founded to respond to the rising demand of boutique and artisanal spirits in the blossoming cocktail culture in the US. For that reason, we have grown our spirits portfolio to cover only the finest spirits in every category to fit the needs of the modern mixologist as well as our desire for quality. Currently, the collection is comprised of products that truly compliment one other.