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Cocktails: Profitable Assets or Expensive Beverage Offerings

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Hospitality EXPO – The Irish Industries Exhibition 2014

Cocktails – Profitable Asset or Expensive Beverages



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Introduction

- Cocktails have become **very popular** in the majority of hospitality and licensed premises in recent years.
- **Customer demands** for contemporary and classic cocktails has driven demand.
- The **training, innovation, equipment, new brands and exotic glassware**, have all contributed to the overall success and interest in these drinks.
- It is crucial before you decide to enter into the cocktail area of your overall drinks offerings to ensure that you have **all the elements required to build success and maintain a healthy business**.
- Many establishments in the past have entered in the cocktail area only to exit after a short space of time through **lack of training, decreasing profits or poor overall conception** for the cocktail offering

Making Cocktails

Techniques & Skills - Recipe formation

*‘Creating a cocktail involves a **bit of chemistry, a bit of sensory excitement, and a lot of patience**’.*

Techniques & Skills

Making a good cocktail is about getting the **balance of flavours right**. Cocktails are about three things, **balance, style and consistency**. If you can get that right everything else will fall into place. The cocktail service also involves strategic decisions regarding the methods used to prepare the cocktails, these decisions depend on several factors;

- If the cocktail contains a cloudy ingredient such as fresh cream, egg yolk, lemon or orange or a similar opaque item it should be **shaken**.
- If the ingredients are all clear and are also of Co2 (fizzy) then the cocktail should be **stirred**.
- If the drinks involved are of different specific gravity's and the bartender wishes to keep the layers separate then the cocktail be **built** slowly over the back of a spoon or just over ice.
- If the cocktail requires freshly extracted oils or juices then the cocktail should be **muddled**.

Recipe Formation – General Guidelines to creating a well balanced cocktail

- Creating new cocktail recipes can be one of the **most challenging and rewarding** components of the hospitality industry, study and a basic understanding of **flavour integration** can help you begin to create your own signature cocktails.
- **Taste with your brain** as well as your taste buds, with the goal of understanding the **interplay** of flavours and ingredients.
- Search out **interesting ingredients** and use them to develop contemporary classics. This includes new, high-quality spirits, juices, and bar mixes. Don't neglect garnishes and glassware.
- Seek a balance of elements within the drink, **acidity, sweetness, bitterness, and alcohol**. A strong drink is not automatically a “better drink, its alcohol content should complement the other ingredients.
- **Involve all the senses**. Remember, we “taste” first with our eyes, then with our nose, before we put a glass to our lips.
- Consider how the drink “**finishes**” when first swallowed. Clear and icy? The slight “heat” of the alcohol? A tinge of citrus or mint?



Preparation Areas – Cocktail Equipment

Cocktail Making Stations / Equipment

Cocktail Station/s: each of your cocktail stations should be fitted with the following equipment:

- Ice chest and ice bin
- Containers for bottles: bottle wells and speed rails
- Handgun for dispensing soft-drink mixes
- Mixing equipment (good selection) and blender set on recess shelves
- Selection of appropriate glassware
- Cocktail Station Set up Checklist [\(See separate file for display and discussion\)](#)



Standardized Glassware



- Each standard cocktail or mixed drink should be always served in a *standard glass*, **a glass of specified size and shape that is used every time that the cocktail is made.**
- The size is the more important feature since it **controls both the quantity of the ingredients that must fill it and the taste.**
- But **a standard, distinctive shape is important, too.** It makes a drink look the same every time, as well as taste the same, and it reduces the possibility of using the wrong size glass.
- **Some people equate glass size with portion size, and this has a superficial validity.** But the real portion size is the drink size, and the base liquor is controlled by the shot glass or jigger.
- **When standardising your glassware choose whatever size and shape will give each drink the most appeal.**
- **You can manage nicely with very few styles and sizes of glass if you wish;** one glass for Cocktails and Champagne, one for rocks drinks, one for highballs, one for tall drinks and beer, one for wine, and one for brandy and after-dinner liqueurs.
- **The fewer the glass types, the fewer the mistakes in service.** Your **choices depend on your clientele, your drinks, and your image.** The glass for each drink should be specified on its standardised recipe record, as well as on your drink list posted at the bar.

Standardising Mixed Drinks and Cocktails

The basis for controlling the Quantity, Quality and Profit Levels Required

Each bar has its own **standard drink and cocktail sizes**. Most bars will offer *large portions* of the classic cocktails, some bars will offer *medium to small portions* of cocktails **depending on the nature of the enterprise and the clientele**.

A recipe that specifies exactly how a given drink is made at a given cocktail operation is known as a **standardized recipe**. (See separate file for display and discussion)

1. Specifying the **exact quantity** of each ingredient,
2. The **glass size** to be used
3. The **exact procedure** for preparing the cocktail.
4. The **garnish** is included, as is anything else that is necessary to the cocktail or mixed drink.
5. A **picture** of the finished cocktail in its **assigned glass**
6. You should a standardized recipe for **every mixed drink or cocktail** that you serve.
7. **Keep the recipes** in a loose leaf notebook with plastic page covers or better yet enter the recipes into your computer.
8. Use copies or print outs to train **new bartenders**, make sure that every bartender, old and new, follows the house recipes to the letter,
9. If you make this happen you will really have achieved control of quality and quantity.
10. The standardized recipe is the basis for the costing and pricing described in all forms of beverage costing systems.
11. Every recipe should be cost periodically, and the cost of each ingredient should be recorded on the recipe card, along with the date of costing.
12. It is a good idea to review the whole recipe at this time to be sure you have not changed a garnish or a glass, or changed Cointreau to Triple Sec in your Margarita cocktail without recording the change.

Pricing Decisions

- All pricing decisions involve **interdependent relationships** among drinks and drink prices. The price you charge for one kind can affect the demand for others.
- As you create an overall **pricing philosophy**, ask yourself the following questions:
 1. Are the prices for liquor, wine, and beer **integrated logically** with each other:
 2. Is the pricing program organized into **simple, easily monitored categories**?
 3. How do the prices **compare with competitors prices**? (you should check on this at least twice a year).
 4. Are the drink prices in line with the **food prices**?
 5. Are we charging prices that are **profitable**, considering our budget?
- **Know you exact pouring costs** and do not become **too focused on low margins**. By pouring premium brands, you can expect higher costs, but also more euro's to add to the bottom line because you can charge more for these drinks and cocktails.

Menu Configuration



- **Menu Design** (you must consider what's practical, viable and workable, no two locations, events or parties are the same).
- **Research and training:** your research should be desk and primary based, this research this should take the form of the collection and collaboration of authoritative local, national and international knowledge to suit your cocktail menu. This could include attending training courses, trade events and culinary competitions.
- **Promotion activities:** promotion of your cocktails and mixed drinks should incorporate regular special theme nights (007 James Bond, summer local or national festival nights, major national or community sporting events), sample size portions of your cocktails should be offered to your guests a couple of times weekly in shooter glasses, the servers should use this opportunity to advise guests on recipe choices, cocktail menus must be backed up with bigger point of sale items which could include (electronic cocktail signage, posters, cocktail props and staff uniforms which incorporate the availability of good cocktails within the location advertised.)
- **Cocktail recipes:** these recipes should reflect consumers current eating habits, it is commonly accepted they consume far more fresh fruit and are far more knowledgeable about healthier foods, these changes must be incorporated into cocktail recipe and menu development.
- **The signature cocktail:** this can the form of one cocktail or a line of variations of classic cocktails for example fresh fruit flavored Margaritas or Cosmopolitans, signature cocktails act as a point of differentiation affording your party, cocktail bar or indeed yourself the opportunity to gain a good reputation. So make sure that you provide a signature cocktail on your menu list.
- **Cocktail menus** should always provide transparency in the price structures of the cocktails, these drinks should not only be appealing from the ingredients which they contain but they are reasonably priced
- **Striking a balance:** it is crucial that the cocktail menu strikes a balance between the major cocktail categories which you offer, this involves selecting the right proportions of pre-dinner and after dinner (low ball cocktails), long drinks (highball cocktails), restorative drinks, alcohol free, hot drinks, shooters and Champagne cocktails. The danger here is to create an imbalance where your menu consists of too many cocktails from one particular category, which will restrict choice.

Delivering The Cocktail Experience

- The ‘**cocktail experience**’ may be defined as a series of events – both tangible and intangible – that a customer experiences when eating and drinking out. It is difficult to define exactly where the overall cocktail experience actually starts, and indeed ends,
- The **series of events and experiences** your customers undergo when enjoying your cocktails may be divided into those **tangible aspects** of the products, that is *the actual cocktails*, and those **intangible aspects** such as service, *atmosphere, music, mood* etc. (See separate file for display and discussion)
- It is the appreciation of the different components by the management team that is the important; this is what **separate the top quality cocktail outlets from the outlets who are just dabbling in cocktails**. Some of the principle areas which you might focus on to deliver excellence of quality in cocktail service might include;
 1. The use of fresh ingredients (including seasonality)
 2. Diverse cocktail menu (long drinks, muddled cocktails, aperitif, house and signature cocktails)
 3. Imaginative ingredients combinations (super premium alcohol brands, exotic fruits i.e. summer berries)
 4. Drink mixing abilities and customer service skills
 5. Garnishing skills (includes the wow factor, carved pineapple, copper mugs, jars).
 6. Overall presentation (includes unusual elements like atmosphere, theme, quirky items).

Conclusion, Further Reading & Resources, Skills Development.

Conclusions

- The cocktail offering of the bar has become the most attractive and profitable asset offering infinite scope and variety to customers
- Cocktails should always suit the context and the type of bar or they will not appeal to your customers.
- To capitalize on cocktails, it is crucial that bars carry out some proper research and training into the recipes they offer on their cocktail menu.
- Using standardized glassware and recipes can deliver quality, consistency and acceptable profits.
- Delivering a total cocktail experience separates the top quality outlets from the dabblers.

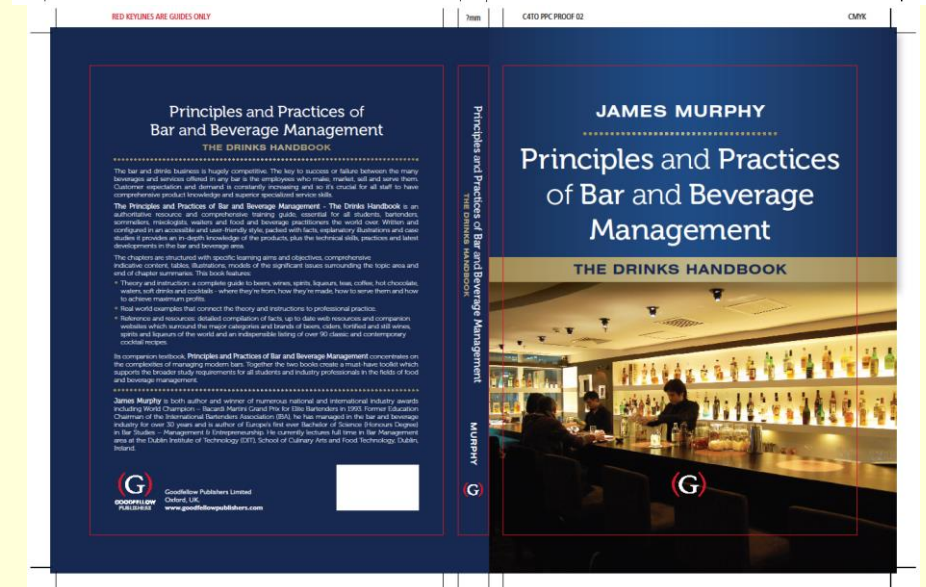
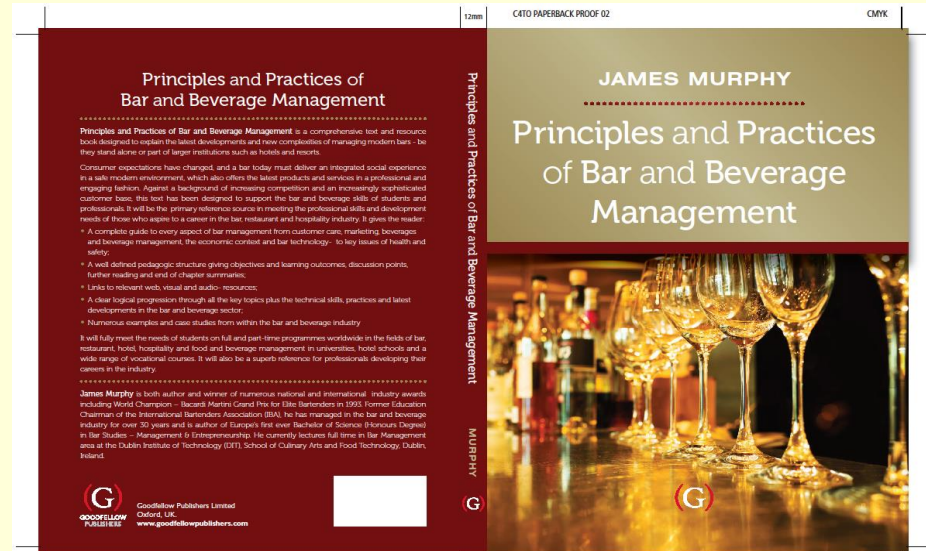
Further reading & resources (New Books – Special Exhibition Price Today !!!)

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<http://www.goodfellowpublishers.com/academic-publishing.php?promoCode=&partnerID=&content=story&storyID=316&fixedmetadataID=211> P.P.B.B.M – D.H Book

Training & Skills Development

The Dublin Institute of Technology, School of Culinary Arts & Food Technology, Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1. (Full / Part-time courses)



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Web resources

- www.MuseumOfTheAmericanCocktail.org Museum of the American cocktail.
- www.iba-world.com Recipes and details from World cocktail competitions.
- www.flairtender.org Information on flair style cocktail making.
- www.barflair.org Flair Bartenders Association (FBA).
- <http://www.barmenus.com> Create free cocktail menus on line.