

THE MANUAL

The Essential Guide for Men



Food & Drink

OPENING A BAR? READ THESE TIPS

Written by [Cator Sparks](#) — Posted on August 15, 2016

Are you dabbling with the dream of opening a bar? Do you know how high your bar should be? What materials don't rust? What kind of lighting to use? Thought so.

We spoke to hospitality designer [Jeffery Beers](#), who has designed bars across the globe from Jay Z's [40/40 Club](#) to [db brasserie](#) in Vegas to hear his sage advice on how a bar should look and work. While you may not have a budget to rival these beauties, his tips are equally important for a tiny tavern to a baller's brasserie.

Key Material and Finish for the Bar

To make a bar a bar, to make it long lasting, I am a big believer in concrete and steel. Cast concrete that is polished with wax is one of my favorite looks and will last forever. Sealing and waxing steel prevents rust, and creates an indestructible and cool bar. If you're using wood, go for something that is tried and true for the outdoors. I personally like teak and a Brazilian wood called ipe, which are both tough materials that age well and look good polished. In the stone family, granite is the most common and safest because it is very dense and it is resistant to stains like spilled red wine. Yet, personally I find it boring and prefer to work with quartzite that looks more like marble. While I love marble, I shy away from using it for bars as it easily stains and demands a

fair amount of upkeep. Marble as well as zinc are beautiful, but keep in mind they give a very traditional, European aesthetic.



Materials and Finishes for Faucet & Sinks, Hardware, Beer Taps, Etc.

I love to sail and I am therefore a fan of stainless steel. I gravitate to its resilience and its crisp, nautical feel. Also, it does not rust, ever, and therefore very easy to maintain. If you pair it with wood, you have a very yacht club feel; otherwise it looks cool and modern against concrete and polished steel. For something different and sharp, I am currently working with stainless steel in black finish and I am looking forward to seeing how the completed project will look. Brass is the iconic metal for bars and I love it. However it demands a lot of upkeep and polishing as it easily discolors; it gets a rather funky if you let it go and it oxidizes.



Shelving and Displaying Bottles

I am firm believer that the alcohol needs to be displayed at the back of the bar. You can install wood shelves for something standard. I would personally organize a grid of cubbies that are internally lit to give a fresh and original take on the traditional bottle organization and storage.



If you're adventurous, island shaped, u-shaped bars allow for a wonderful liquor display. The classic bar at the former iconic restaurant, The Four Seasons, for example, had a beautiful center presentation with storage underneath and chandelier above it. Overall the look was classic, elegant and quite nice.

Refrigerators

I use refrigerator drawers and top loading refrigerators. They are clean and sleek, easy to use, and conveniently display beverages and alcohols, like beer and white wine, that need to be chilled. The old school choice of course was a swing-door, like a under back bar refrigerator hidden from site. They are actually quite cumbersome; you have to bend down to properly see what is inside, and the open swinging door gets in the way.



Accessories: Bar Stools, Hooks, Mirrors

I have two schools of thoughts when it comes to bar stools. Personally, I prefer a backless bar stool – they are key component in a social gathering as they let you to sit either with your side or back to the bar, and allow for groups to be together and mingle comfortably in a circle formation. For bars in upscale hotels, lounges and

restaurants, we use stools with backs. While they regulate you to facing the bar, the back makes seating more comfortable, luxurious and can act as a rest for bags and totes.



Small hooks underneath the bar top are very popular too. It's a nice trick and I hear it's very much appreciated to hang bags, hats and even coats.

Mirrors are fantastic, and they are a key component to the design of a bar. They are normally placed with the back bar display; the mirror goes on the back wall first and the shelves are installed on to it. We often take a strip of mirror and angle it 15 – 20 degrees in order to reflect the whole bar scene. It's an interesting trick to encourage people watching and make a more social atmosphere.



What to Avoid When Building a Bar

A pet peeve of mine is when a bar is higher than it should be. The correct height for a bar is 42" and it is direct proportion to a standard bar stool. When the bar is too high I feel like a kid in a high chair and it doesn't feel right.

The bar's face under the bar top should be made from a durable material. People shoes, bags and brief cases bang into it, causing cracks in a mirror finish or scuffs and tears in a leather finish.

Avoid bright spotlights and go for more intimate and dimmed lighting. I personally favor bar lamps that are directly hardwired into the bar top. They give off a nice glow, and they create a warm, inviting atmosphere.