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How to Use This Book

This book was designed for folks who want to organize a successful and enjoyable cocktail party at home. Part 1 of the book focuses on preparations for the cocktail party, and has a special emphasis on how to prepare splendid cocktails easily and in a professional manner.

If you're having a tough time deciding how many cocktails to put on your cocktail menu, head over to the section *Throwing a Cocktail Party for the First Time*. I also have special tips for snacks in the section *Don't Forget How to Serve Snacks*.

Information about the right glasses to buy for your home bar can be found in the section *Stocking Your Bar With the Right Glasses*. You'll find a list of must-have tools for the bar in the section of the book titled *The Mixologist's Arsenal*. For those who are not familiar with the base alcoholic spirits used in cocktail-making, I have created a special section in the book titled *An Introduction to Crowd Favorites: Spirits* just for the purpose of explaining why specific spirits are used most frequently in cocktails.

When you're ready to mix your first cocktail, head over to Part 2 of the book, where I've prepared dozens of unique and delightful cocktail recipes. In this section of the book, you'll find cocktail recipes for tequila shots, martinis, Bloody Mary concoctions, and more.

Enjoy the book and welcome to the world of cocktail making!

Part 1: Introduction

Cocktails are the *heart* of many social gatherings, both big and small, which is why people frequently spend a lot of money ordering custom cocktails from bars and other cocktail makers. My own fascination with great cocktails (sometimes called "gourmet cocktails") began when I was in my late twenties, when I started experimenting with making cocktails at home.

What began as something that was done out of curiosity, slowly began to grow into a passion – a passion for tasty, invigorating cocktails. Cocktails can liven up social gatherings, whether they're large gatherings with a group of acquaintances, or small parties with friends and loved ones. After some months, I developed my skills (and confidence) enough to invest in the various glassware and other accessories that make the *barista's* life much easier.

I may not be a bartender, but my passion for making great cocktails is equal to – or may even exceed – the passion of a professional.

In my book, you'll find a collection of the most interesting cocktail recipes you can use for every occasion, in every season. At the very heart of my writing is a simple message for all: enjoy life, and celebrate the best moments with a cocktail or two. Welcome to the wonderful world of homemade cocktails!

Throwing a Cocktail Party for the First Time

Organizing an impressive and enjoyable cocktail party does not require rocket science. Nor does it require the quick hands of a highly trained bartender.

That's one of the main reasons why I wrote this book: I want *anyone* who wants to throw a cocktail party to be able to do so *without hesitation*. Now, the first thing that you have to think about when organizing a cocktail party is the *line-up* of cocktails that you'll be serving your guests.

Some people might think: well, it's *my* cocktail party, so why don't we go wild? Why not serve six or ten different cocktails to our guests?

The prospect of presenting ten different cocktails to happy guests might sound *exciting* at first, but think about it: you're the *only one* who will be doing the mixing. Unless you have two or three other people manning your home bar, it'll be difficult to keep serving cocktails to people if you're offering ten or more different types.

The ideal number of cocktails for small cocktail parties is *three*. That's the magic number. Just enough variety to keep the party lively, but not so many that you'll have a tough time mixing cool cocktails for your guests.

Remember, your aim is to create an atmosphere of enjoyment with the brand-new cocktails right at the center of the crowd's attention. It takes a bit of practice, but trust me when I tell you this: it won't take long before you're mixing cocktails like a professional *barista*.

If you can, pick cocktail recipes that you can easily whip up *before* the guests start knocking on your door. Cocktail recipes that require only crushed ice, for example, are a good choice. Of

course, the best cocktail recipes are those that are produced *at the moment* a person asks. Fresh cocktails are unmatched.

One gadget I recommend you *get* before hosting a cocktail party is a good, old fashioned blender. The blender doesn't have to be fancy or overly expensive, it just has to be really good at one thing (and one thing only): crushing ice cubes.

Get a blender with a strong motor and sharp blades that can make easy work of a bunch of frozen cubes, and you've got a partner for life in the home bar. With a trusty blender, making cocktails for ten or twenty people is a breeze. Many cocktail recipes require crushed ice. Ice acts as a cool medium for all the disparate ingredients of a cocktail, and also helps make the cocktail palatable and smooth.