

Anatomy Of A Well-Designed Bar

By Beth Lorenzini, Editor-in-Chief
The key to good bar design is efficiency; the fewer steps a bartender has to take, the more drinks he or she can make per hour and the higher the bar's sales. Proper layout, smart space allocation and incorporating all of the tools and equipment required to run and maintain the bar are critical. Frankly, getting it right demands the expertise of a true bar-design expert (vs. a general contractor, architect or interior designer, for example). Good bar design starts with input from the operations team—especially the bartender—and coordination between the mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineers and the equipment installers. It's likely there are more poorly designed bars in operation than good ones. Here are some tips on how to build a better bar.

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● The drink rail should be guest-facing, perforated stainless with a drain.

● Install task lighting (LED, other) under the bar to enhance bartenders' visibility.

● Design areas for waste receptacles.

● Triple-check that underbar clearance accommodates equipment heights, legs included.

● High-volume bars require a glass-washing machine with rack storage.

● Install a glass/shaker rinser by the wells.

● Build in generous space for beer- and soda-line chases and don't let the soda gun be installed so it crosses the ice bin.

● Add a small ice well with spacer bars next to the main jockey-box ice well to store fresh garnishes and fruits chilled and within reach. Do not fill the hand sink with ice.

● Create fully equipped work zones to avoid employee crossover (bartenders, servers and bussers).

● All bar equipment should be on legs or have covered bases. Floor drains should be installed so the floor can be washed down.

● Include plenty of space to store glassware; order the right racks for your glass types.

● Add purse/coat hooks under the front bar top and possibly outlets for device charging.

● Bar depths should not strain bartenders' backs.

● Arrange bar equipment, including taps and POS stations, so bartenders face the customers.

● Backbar shelves need to fit the tallest and widest bottles you stock.

Photo courtesy of Glastender, Catalyst, Cambridge, Mass., designed by RealFood Foodservice Consulting.