

POUR SCIENCE

THE HOME MIXOLOGY CURRICULUM

Equipment → economics → technique → the classics, perfected. Why your **\$2.20 old fashioned** beats the bar's \$17 one, and how to make every staple its **optimum** self.

COST-PER-POUR MATH

PERFECT VS NORMAL

7 BOTTLES · 40 DRINKS

HOSTING PROTOCOL



LV 0 · THE SETUP

LV 1 · TECHNIQUE

LV 2 · THE CLASSICS

LV 3 · HOSTING

COST PER POUR

A 750ml bottle holds ~25 oz — that's 12 standard 2-oz pours. Divide the bottle price, add the mixers, and the bar's markup becomes a business insight. Ingredient count is the single biggest cost driver.

HOME COST VS BAR PRICE • MID-SHELF SPIRITS, 2026

DRINK	INGRED.	YOUR COST → WEHO BAR PRICE
Vodka soda / coke	2	 \$1.60 → \$14
Gin & tonic	3	 \$2.10 → \$15
Old fashioned	4	 \$2.20 → \$17
Martini	3	 \$2.40 → \$18
Margarita (fresh)	4-5	 \$3.20 → \$16
Espresso martini	4	 \$3.40 → \$17
Mai tai (real spec)	7	 \$5.50 → \$19

Assumes ~\$22 vodka/gin, ~\$26 rye, ~\$28 blanco, generic triple sec; fresh citrus and homemade syrup. Your zip code may vary; the ratios won't.

THREE LAWS OF DRINK ECONOMICS

- ▶ **Ingredient count compounds.** Every liqueur is a \$20–40 bottle you amortize. A 7-ingredient tiki drink taxes seven bottles at once.
- ▶ **Citrus + syrup are cheap; liqueurs aren't.** A sour costs pennies over its spirit. Cointreau is why margaritas outrun G&Ts.
- ▶ **The bar charges for labor + rent + theater.** At \$17/drink, your \$40 core kit pays for itself in three drinks.

THE BREAK-EVEN MATH

Full starter setup — 7 staple bottles (~\$170) + core tools (~\$40) + glassware (~\$30) ≈ **\$240**.

At an average \$4 hosted drink vs \$16 out, the setup pays for itself in **~20 drinks** — one good house party. Everything after that is margin. Track it in a spreadsheet if that's fun for you. (It's fun for you.)

THE TOP-SHELF PARADOX

Premium spirits vanish inside citrus and cola — mid-shelf mixes identically for half the price. Spend up **ONLY** where the spirit stands naked: martinis, old fashioned, and neat pours. Cheap bottle in the margarita, good bottle in the martini. That's optimal allocation.

THE EQUIPMENT STACK

Three tiers. Tier 1 makes real cocktails tonight with what's in your kitchen. Tier 2 is the \$40 kit that covers 95% of everything forever. Tier 3 is flex.

TIER 1 • \$0 TONIGHT

Kitchen Conscription

- ▶ **Mason jar + lid** = shaker. Airtight, sturdy, iconic.
- ▶ **Tablespoon** = jigger: 2 tbsp = 1 oz. Measure everything anyway.
- ▶ **Fork** held against the jar = strainer.
- ▶ **Chopstick** = barspoon; **rolling pin** = muddler.

Limits: no elegance, splashy strain. But the drink is 90% there.

TIER 2 • ~\$40 CORE

The Forever Kit

- ▶ **Boston shaker** (two tins) — seals better, cleans faster than cobbler style.
- ▶ **Double jigger** 1oz/2oz with interior lines.
- ▶ **Hawthorne strainer** — the one with the spring.
- ▶ **Barspoon** — long, twisted stem.
- ▶ **Handheld citrus press** — fresh juice is non-negotiable (page 8).

TIER 3 • FLEX

The Aesthetic Arsenal

- ▶ **Mixing glass + julep strainer** — stirred drinks feel ceremonial.
- ▶ **Fine mesh strainer** — double-strain shaken citrus; no pulp, no ice shards.
- ▶ **Y-peeler** — wide citrus twists for expressing oils.
- ▶ **2" cube molds** — big ice, slow melt, clear flex.
- ▶ **Atomizer** — vermouth rinse mist for the drama.

GLASSWARE — FOUR SHAPES COVER EVERYTHING



Rocks

old fashioned, negroni, margarita on ice



Coupe

martini, daiquiri, anything served "up"



Highball

collins, G&T, anything + soda



Anything stemmed

wine glass covers spritzes + flex pours

Thrift stores sell coupes for \$2. Nobody at your party will know, and vintage glass photographs better anyway.

SEVEN BOTTLES, FORTY DRINKS

The minimum viable bar. Each bottle unlocks a family of classics; together they cover almost everything anyone orders at your place.

BOTTLE 1 • ~\$22

Vodka

The neutral workhorse. Unlocks: vodka soda, moscow mule, espresso martini, cosmo, bloody mary. Mid-shelf is genuinely fine — vodka's whole job is staying out of the way.

BOTTLE 2 • ~\$24

London Dry Gin

Vodka with a personality (juniper). Unlocks: G&T, martini, negroni, gimlet, tom collins. This bottle earns a mid-upper pick — it stars in the martini.

BOTTLE 3 • ~\$26

Rye or Bourbon

Rye = spicier, bourbon = sweeter. Unlocks: old fashioned, manhattan, whiskey sour, boulevardier. One 100-proof bottle punches above its price in cocktails.

BOTTLE 4 • ~\$28

Blanco Tequila

100% agave on the label or leave it at the store. Unlocks: margarita, paloma, ranch water, tequila soda + lime. The workhorse of every LA gathering.

BOTTLE 5 • ~\$14

Triple Sec / Orange Liqueur

The great connector — margarita, cosmo, sidecar all route through it. Generic works; Cointreau (~\$38) is the upgrade you taste.

BOTTLES 6+7 • ~\$24

Sweet + Dry Vermouth

Fortified wine, NOT liquor — it oxidizes. Buy small bottles, **refrigerate after opening**, replace in ~3 months. Unlocks: martini, manhattan, negroni. Dead vermouth is the #1 silent killer of home martinis.

THE PANTRY LAYER (~\$15)

- ▶ **Angostura bitters** — the salt & pepper of drinks; one bottle lasts a year.
- ▶ **Fresh limes + lemons** — weekly. Bottled juice is a firable offense (page 8).
- ▶ **Simple syrup** — 1:1 sugar:hot water, shake, refrigerate 3 weeks. Costs \$0.30 to make; \$6 to buy. Choose wisely, analyst.
- ▶ **Soda water, tonic, cola, ginger beer** — the lengtheners.

THE ICE MANIFESTO

Ice is an ingredient, not a garnish. It chills AND dilutes — both are part of the recipe.

- ▶ **Shaking/stirring:** lots of fresh, hard, cold ice. More ice = colder drink = LESS dilution (counterintuitive but true).
- ▶ **Serving:** one big 2" cube melts slow and looks expensive.
- ▶ **Old freezer ice** tastes like the freezer. Fresh trays before guests. Always.

DILUTION IS THE ENGINE

Every technique exists to do one thing: add ~20–25% ice-cold water to the drink. Under-diluted = harsh and hot. Over-diluted = sad and thin. Shaking and stirring are just two speeds of the same machine.

SHAKE OR STIR — THE ONLY RULE YOU NEED

SHAKE • 12–15 SECONDS, HARD



- ▶ **When:** anything with citrus, cream, egg white, or pineapple — cloudy ingredients that need violence to integrate.
- ▶ **Result:** colder, aerated, frothy top, tiny ice chips. Alive.
- ▶ Shake until the tin frosts and your hand hurts a little.

STIR • 30–45 SECONDS, SMOOTH



- ▶ **When:** spirit-only drinks — martini, manhattan, negroni, old fashioned. Everything is already clear; keep it silk.
- ▶ **Result:** crystal clarity, heavy velvet texture, zero air.
- ▶ Stir like you're being watched by a slow-motion camera.

Memory hook: if it has juice, shake the juice. If it's all booze, stir with poise.

THE SOUR TEMPLATE — ONE SPEC, TWENTY DRINKS

2 oz spirit • ¾ oz citrus • ¾ oz sweet

Swap the parts, rename the drink: tequila+lime+agave = margarita's skeleton; whiskey+lemon+simple = whiskey sour; gin+lime+simple = gimlet; rum+lime+simple = daiquiri. Learn ONE ratio, own a whole menu. Adjust ±¼ oz to taste — YOUR palate is the spec sheet.

TASTE BEFORE YOU POUR

Dip the barspoon (or a straw with a finger over it), taste, adjust. Too sharp → a bar spoon of syrup. Too sweet → squeeze of citrus. Flat → pinch of salt or 2 dashes bitters. Every pro does this on every drink; skipping it is how "recipe followers" stay average. You're a QA engineer now.

THE MARTINI, PERFECTED

Three ingredients, nowhere to hide. The gap between a normal martini and a perfect one is the largest in all of mixology — and it's entirely technique and temperature.

THE NORMAL ONE (what most kitchens produce)

- ▶ Room-temp gin from the cabinet.
- ▶ Vermouth that's been on a shelf, open, since 2023. It's vinegar now. You can't taste it but the drink can.
- ▶ Shaken (sorry, Mr. Bond) — clouds the drink, over-chips the ice, bruises the texture.
- ▶ Poured into a room-temp glass that warms it in 90 seconds.
- ▶ An olive dropped in like an afterthought.
- ▶ **Verdict:** drinkable. Warmish, thin, slightly flat. A 6/10 that thinks it's fancy.

THE PERFECT ONE (the optimum spec)

- ▶ **Gin lives in the freezer.** Permanently. Colder start = less melt needed = denser texture.
- ▶ **Vermouth lives in the fridge,** bought small, replaced every ~3 months. Fresh dry vermouth is floral, not sour.
- ▶ **Spec:** 2½ oz gin · ½ oz dry vermouth (5:1). Adjust wetter (3:1) or drier to taste — the band is legal, warmth is not.
- ▶ **Stir 30–45 seconds** over lots of fresh ice, strain into a **freezer-chilled coupe.**
- ▶ **Express a lemon twist:** snap the peel skin-side down over the surface — oil mist — then rim the glass and drop it in. Or three cold olives on a pick. Never both.
- ▶ **Verdict:** ice-dense, silky, aromatic. The one that makes guests go quiet mid-sip.

THE 90-SECOND WINDOW

A martini is at its peak for about 90 seconds after the pour and warm after ten minutes. This is why pros serve small and cold rather than big and ambitious. Optimum play at home: stir the full batch, pour HALF into the chilled coupe, park the rest in the freezer in the mixing glass. Refill at peak coldness. Infinite perfect martini, zero warm sips.

DIRTY / GIBSON / VESPER — THE FORKS

Dirty: add ¼–½ oz olive brine (use good olives; jar juice quality is THE variable). **Gibson:** cocktail onion instead of olive — suddenly it's savory. **Vodka martini:** valid, softer, let no one shame you. **50/50:** equal gin and vermouth — lunch-safe elegance.

COST CHECK

Perfect martini at home: ~\$2.40 with a \$24 gin. The \$18 bar version's only real advantages were the chilled glass and the fresh vermouth — which you now control. Congratulations on the arbitrage.

NORMAL VS OPTIMUM

Same drinks everyone makes — and the two or three moves that flip each from fine to flawless.

MARGARITA

NORMAL

- ▶ Sour mix (neon, corn syrup), mixto tequila, blender optional, giant salt-crusted rim like a driveway in January.

OPTIMUM

- ▶ 2 oz blanco (100% agave) • 1 oz lime squeezed today • ¾ oz orange liqueur • ¼ oz agave. Shake hard, rocks glass, big ice.
- ▶ Half-rim the salt (flaky, not iodized) — sipper chooses each pass.

OLD FASHIONED

NORMAL

- ▶ Muddled orange slice + neon cherry pulped into fruit salad, drowned in soda, any whiskey, crushed ice melting fast.

OPTIMUM

- ▶ 2 oz rye/bourbon (100 proof) • ¼ oz rich syrup (2:1 demerara) • 3 dashes Angostura. Stir 20 rotations over ice, strain onto ONE big cube.
- ▶ Express orange peel over the top, rim, drop in. No fruit murder. Real maraschino cherry if flexing.

ESPRESSO MARTINI

NORMAL

- ▶ Cold stale coffee, heavy on the Kahlúa (sugar bomb), lazy shake, no foam — arrives looking like iced tea in a coupe.

OPTIMUM

- ▶ 1½ oz vodka • 1 oz coffee liqueur • 1 oz espresso **PULLED HOT just before**, ¼ oz simple. Hot espresso + violent 15-second shake = the crema-style foam cap.
- ▶ Double-strain into a chilled coupe; 3 beans on the foam (health, wealth, happiness).

THE PATTERN, IN CASE YOU'RE MODELING IT

Every "perfect" column is the same four levers: fresh over bottled, cold over warm, measured over eyeballed, aromatics expressed over decoration dropped. Four features, massive lift. Deploy everywhere.

DO & DON'T

The complete etiquette-and-technique ledger. Tape it inside the liquor cabinet.

DO

- ▶ **Measure with a jigger, every pour.** Free-pouring is a bartender's skill earned over thousands of drinks; at home it's just variance.
- ▶ **Chill the glass.** Freezer for 10 min, or ice water while you build. Costs nothing, changes everything.
- ▶ **Squeeze citrus the same day.** Lime juice peaks at 4–10 hours and dies within a day.
- ▶ **Taste and adjust before serving.** Barspoon dip, always.
- ▶ **Refrigerate vermouth** and date the bottle with a sharpie.
- ▶ **Use more ice than feels right** when shaking or stirring.
- ▶ **Prep garnishes before guests arrive** — peels cut, olives skewered, station clean.
- ▶ **Keep a water pitcher out** — hydrated guests party longer and remember the drinks fondly.

DON'T

- ▶ **Don't use bottled citrus juice.** It's pasteurized regret. The single biggest quality lever in this entire manual.
- ▶ **Don't shake spirit-only drinks.** Martinis and manhattans get cloudy and thin. Stir.
- ▶ **Don't store vermouth on the shelf.** It's wine. Open shelf vermouth is the silent saboteur of page 6.
- ▶ **Don't mix top-shelf into juice or cola** — see the paradox on page 2. Waste of a good bottle AND of good juice.
- ▶ **Don't fill the shaker halfway with ice.** Less ice melts MORE (more surface contact per cube, warmer bath). Pack it.
- ▶ **Don't muddle mint like it owes you money.** Press gently; shredded mint turns bitter and gets stuck in teeth.
- ▶ **Don't serve a stranger a surprise double.** Consent applies to ABV. Announce the strong ones.
- ▶ **Don't apologize for a simple menu.** Three drinks done perfectly beats twelve done adequately (see next page).

THE ONE-SENTENCE VERSION

Fresh citrus, cold glass, measured pours, correct technique per drink, taste before serving — do those five forever and you are already better than most bars on a Friday rush.

SIN SEVERITY INDEX — HOW MUCH EACH MISTAKE ACTUALLY COSTS THE DRINK

Bottled citrus juice		CAPITAL OFFENSE
Dead shelf vermouth		FELONY
Eyeballed pours		FELONY
Shaking a martini		MISDEMEANOR
Warm glass		MISDEMEANOR
Wrong glass shape		VIBE TICKET

Fix the top two and your drinks improve more than any bottle upgrade could deliver. The index is opinionated; the physics is not.

HOSTING PROTOCOL

The difference between "making drinks all night" and "being at your own party": batching, a tight menu, and a self-serve lane.

THE 3-DRINK MENU STRATEGY

- ▶ **One batched cocktail** — the star, pre-made (see math →).
- ▶ **One 2-minute classic** — margarita or old fashioned, made on request for the theater of it.
- ▶ **One self-serve highball station** — spirit, mixers, cut limes, ice bucket, jigger. Guests entertain themselves.
- ▶ Print the tiny menu. Constraints read as confidence; "anything you want" reads as chaos.

BATCHING MATH

servings × spec + 20% water, bottle it, freeze/fridge

- ▶ Multiply every ingredient by guest count × 1.5 drinks.
- ▶ **Add the dilution manually** — 20% of total volume as water — because there's no shake happening later.
- ▶ Spirit-only batches (martini, negroni) live in the freezer; citrus batches in the fridge, juice added <4h before.
- ▶ Serve from the bottle into chilled glasses. You've turned a 4-min drink into a 10-second pour.

RUN-OF-SHOW • A 8PM PARTY

DAY BEFORE

Batch the star. Freeze trays + big cubes. Chill glasses & vermouth.

6:30 PM

Juice citrus, cut garnishes, set self-serve station, water pitcher OUT.

8:00 PM

Pour batched star as guests land — drink in hand in 60 seconds.

PEAK

Make the 2-min classic on request. Sip your own drink. Exist. You're hosting, not working a shift.

Pace note: food out early, water visible always, and batch strength honest — great hosts send people home happy, not horizontal.

THE HOME BAR METER — WHERE ARE YOU TONIGHT?



Every house bar started with a mason jar and a tablespoon. The meter moves one perfected drink at a time.