

Become a Badass Bartender: The Kit

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It's pretty much agreed that a good bartender is one of the best things in life, like a fabulous hairdresser or just the right bra. A good bartender knows not only how to keep you at that perfect level of tipsy while celebrating, but also when to hand you a drink and let you wallow. At some point, I think almost everyone has looked at a bartender whirling around like Wonder Woman and thought, "I would love to do that — if not in a bar then at least at home!" Well you *can* bartend and I'm going to show you how to get started!

How I Got Here

My story starts two years after I'd finished college: I was working in a small Southern town at a desk job that I *hated*. After hearing me cry about what I was doing with my life, my best friend offered to let me move in with her and her girlfriend in Los Angeles so I could start over. Within a few months, I quit my job and moved across the country. On a whim, I searched the internet for bartending schools in the city and less than a month after moving to the west coast I was a certified bartender. My plan was to bartend until I found my passion, but it turned out that bartending *is* my passion! Now most of my life revolves around bartending: I teach it at one of the most respected schools in Hollywood (okay, so I'm biased), I bartend regularly for a wedding venue in Culver City, and I have brand reps and private clients I make myself available to whenever the need arises. Bartending is fun and I don't want anyone to think it's as intimidating as I once did, so I wrote this kit to help all you little lovebugs see just how accessible it can be.

Things to Buy

Let's start with the basics! You'll need a **mixing tin** to chill and mix everything (it looks so much classier than pouring between two Solo cups and you'll be able to show off those biceps you'll earn from lifting full bottles). They aren't super expensive and they come in all sorts of fun styles!



You'll also need a **pony and jigger** so you can measure what you're pouring. The smaller side is usually half an ounce and the larger side, one ounce.

Get a **waiter's corkscrew/wine key**. I know they can be testy, but they work better than almost any other corkscrew when the bottle has real cork. And practicing how to use it will give you an excuse to enjoy a few bottles of wine!

Wear black! One of the best parts about bartending is that you get to buy new clothes. You've probably noticed that bartenders are almost always wearing black: it's so we can hide our messes. I've got a terrible habit of spilling cranberry juice all over myself, and the beauty of black clothing is that *no one ever knows!* It's like magic! Don't buy anything expensive or super fancy, because chances are high that you will ruin it at some point, so hit up Goodwill and local thrift shops for affordable bartending attire.



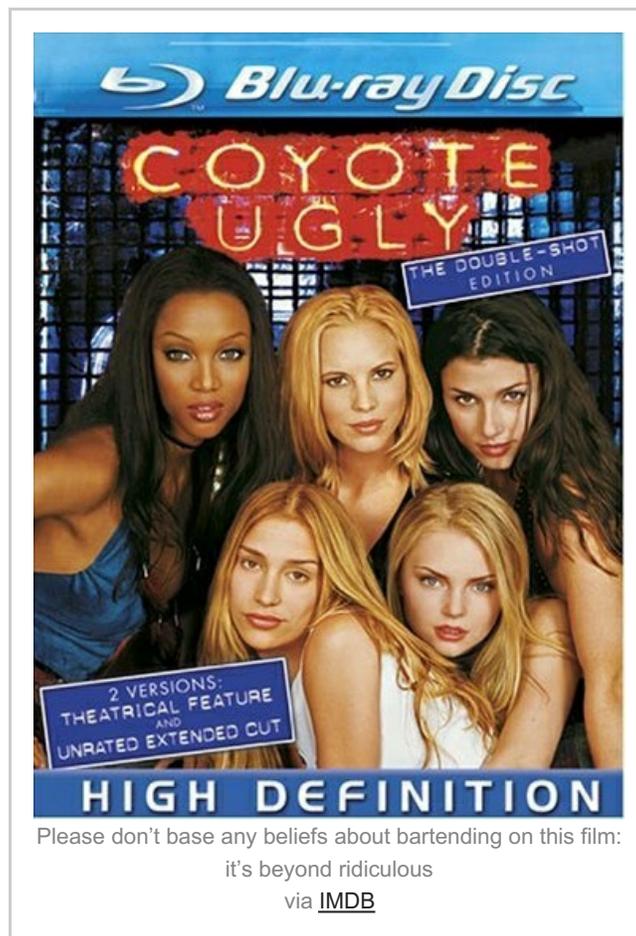


Black Flats, Boss Jacket, All Black Outfit

A bus pass or metro card (or money for a taxi, Sidecar, Lyft, Uber, whatever means you have to get home safely). Weirdly enough, bartenders are infamous for getting DUIs. If you're playing bartender at your friend's birthday party across town, you will totally want to drink too. Do it, but be smart about it and make sure you can make it home without putting your beautiful body or anyone else's at risk.

Get Educated

My favorite way to learn drinks outside of schooling is **basic curiosity**. Every time I go out, I watch the bartender. I know it seems nerdy but, holy smokes, it's so interesting to see everything going on back there! I once walked out of a restaurant after I saw the bartender clean her mixing tin by pulling used mint leaves out with her dirty hands. Ugh. Most of the time, you'll get see awesome things like neon purple drinks and cool ways to swing bottles, so then simply ask the bartender (if s/he's not swamped) to lay some wisdom on you (and tip well if they do)!



Learn some recipes! You already know that the web is a treasure trove of information — like Ali's *Liquor In The* column, where you can find tons of creative recipes for your queer drinking needs. *Webtender* is a great site to reference. Focus on learning some recipes that you can whip out at a party. Pick recipes based on your favorite liquor so you can make drinks outside of the typical vodka and cran. Vodka mixes with almost anything and Jack Daniels is great with carbonated drinks. An easy way to mix drinks is to memorize the 1-2-3 rule.

The 1-2-3 Rule

1 part Triple Sec

2 parts liquor of choice

3 parts sweet and sour mix

Follow this and you can make all sorts of drinks. If you use vodka, you get a Lemon Drop. If you use Jack, you get a Lynchburg Lemonade. Try it with tequila, and you'll have a refreshing Margarita. Brandy or Cognac makes a yummy Sidecar (make sure you put a sugar rim on the glass). Play with it and prepare for delicious results!

Show Off How Special You Are

If you want to own the bartender role, you have to figure out what makes you a special sunflower and embrace that. This is what most people think of as “conversation starters:” hot

pink lipstick, a beautifully coiffed faux hawk, some supa sexy suspenders, whatever! I have a coworker who has an homage to *Alice and Wonderland* tattooed into a sleeve on her arm, which always brings people to the bar, and another coworker who likes to wear mismatched earrings because of the comments they receive. Find your thing and run with it! Purple contacts, a standout necklace, anything that makes it you a little bit different will let you stand out from everyone else at the party.

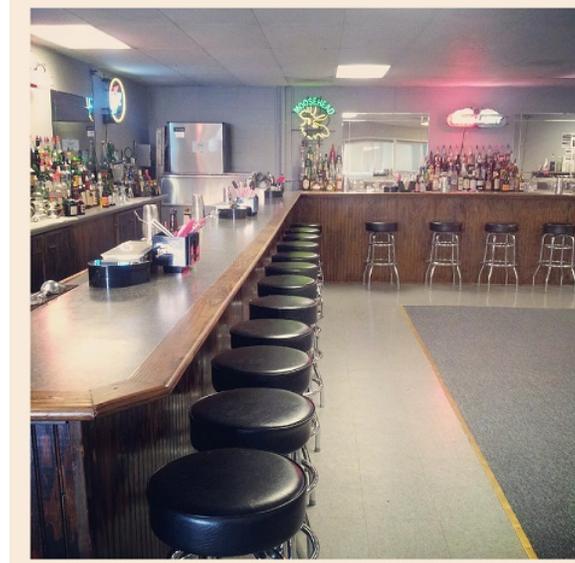


This is me standing waaaay out

Now is the time to bring out your attitude. Bartending is one of the very few service industry jobs in which *the customer is not always right*. When you get sassed as a bartender, you can usually get away with sassing back. In fact, having a strong backbone and some degree of attitude is just as important as being able to recommend good vodka. Working bartenders have a legal responsibility to cut people off when they are drunk but even when acting as a bartender at home with your friends, you have to pony up and confiscate the car keys when your best friend starts laying down creepy pick-up lines on your friend from work. If you experience a moment of low confidence, create a sassy bar persona and fake it. Before you know it, you'll start throwing out witty lines à la Debbie Novotny without a care in the world.

If, after playing around with bartending at home, you decide that you want to delve further and work as a bartender, **I strongly advise that you get trained**. Here's the thing: anyone can pick up a copy of *The Playboy Bartender's Guide* or download a bartending videogame and memorize a few drinks BUT that won't teach you the comfort you need to have with liquor bottles and bar tools. And even more importantly, you won't gain the legal information you need to be a working girl. Did you know that in the state of California, you can spend six months in jail and pay a fine just for accidentally serving a 20 year old? If you don't know what to look for on a fake ID, your approval of a bad fake may not be a viable excuse in court. You need to be informed in order to save your own ass. Most of the schools can teach you what

you need to know in about two weeks — covering everything from drink recipes, legal issues, liquor history, and bar etiquette — and you'll have fun along the way. If you live in the states, check out [Professional Bartending Schools of America](#) to find a location near you.



A typical bartending school

I hope after reading this you throw awesome house/apartment/beach/camp parties, get a thousand requests for the crazy drinks you whip up and impress that cute girl you've been oogling with your new badass bartending skillz. It's summer: go forth, celebrate, and let me know how it goes in the comments!

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