This book is dedicated to the countless men and women all over the world whose bars I have sat at over the years, asking questions, borrowing ideas, and stealing recipes. It is your combined knowledge that fills these pages, and it is you who continually inspire me to work harder, learn more, and share with the rest of the world so that we can continue to keep growing this thing together.

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WHY I MAKE COCKTAILS, AND WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

I’ll never forget the first time I stepped behind the bar. It was the night of April 25, 1996, which was a Thursday. I’d somehow convinced the manager to give me a job, though I had no experience and was about ten times cockier in the interview process than I was in real life—or a hundred times more than I should have been, given my limited social skill set. The place had been around since the repeal of Prohibition, with smoke-stained walls and Naugahyde booths. It was pretty rough-and-tumble, over in the sketchier part of town, opposite the university district, where I lived. I was nervous as hell, and my hands shook as I wrote down every order for the only drink we served there: one of three beers on tap. That night, and for pretty much every night the first summer I spent there, at least ten people told me I was the worst bartender they’d ever seen.

But I honestly didn’t much care. I was at the University of Oregon, getting my degree in interior architecture, and bartending at night to make some money, meet some ladies, and have a little fun. Little did I know the job would grow on me, and that I would begin to grow on those people who thought I was the worst bartender ever. It was just supposed to be a summer job, but when the fall quarter rolled around, the owners asked me to stay. And so I did. I worked at the Tiny Tavern in Eugene, Oregon, for four years while I went to school, and that time spent behind the bar there, serving the same three beers every night, laid the foundation for a life-long love affair with bars and bartending.

I started my first architecture job the summer after I graduated. It wasn’t entirely full-time work, so I kept a few shifts behind the bar to pay the bills. It was fine, and I was happy to be finally working in the field I thought I wanted to be in, but over the course of several years I realized that I’m not really the type to sit behind a desk. I also realized something else, something far more important: bars, bartending, and cocktails were my hobby. I found myself coming home every night and reading up on classic cocktails. I spent my time at work online, bidding on out-of-print cocktail books, rare bar tools, and even rarer liquors. I had cocktail parties and regaled my friends with tales of the daiquiri, sidecar, and Manhattan while we sipped and swilled.

Eventually it became clear to me that my real interest lay in spending time behind the bar, and I slowly phased out the architecture—much to the chagrin of my friends and family. I became involved in the world of restaurants, climbed higher and higher up the ladder of fine dining, and learned more and more every day about the craft of tending bar.

I started my own blog, mainly so our guests could have access to my cocktail recipes. I became more connected in the growing worldwide community of people interested in cocktails. People began to look to me for information, and at some point someone called me an expert.

It’s all very surreal to think about. When I’m not actively behind the bar, I spend my time managing, traveling, speaking at seminars and conferences, and training the next generation of bartenders. And these days, it’s only once a month that someone refers to me as the worst bartender they’ve ever seen.
ANY GOOD COCKTAIL NEEDS THESE THREE ELEMENTS

When I train bartenders, I begin by teaching them one basic rule, and here it is: There are three things, of equal importance, that make a great cocktail. And unless all three are given their due respect, the drink you make isn’t going to reach its full potential.

The first of these is the **recipe** that you choose. Let’s say we’re going to make a whiskey sour in this example. Well, if you really start doing your research, you’re going to find that there are about a thousand different recipes out there for a whiskey sour. Check the Internet if you don’t believe me. One old book might tell you to begin with 1 oz/30 ml of whiskey and 2 oz/60 ml of sour mix, but some guy’s blog might argue that it’s gotta be 2 oz/60 ml of whiskey, with fresh lemon juice and a dollop of egg white. Another recipe might be too sweet, and yet another might not be sweet enough. Choosing the right recipe is exactly one-third of the battle.

The second thing that’s going to make or break our whiskey sour is the **ingredients** we choose. Some whiskeys are better suited to the drink than others. A higher-proof bourbon whiskey is going to shine through the other ingredients better than a lower-proof Irish whiskey. If we’re using lemon juice, is it fresh or frozen? If we’re using egg whites, are they pasteurized and packaged or fresh from a local farm? All of these decisions are as important as the recipe we’ve spent years researching and perfecting.

But the third thing, the one that’s so often overlooked by bartenders and home mixers, and the thing that’s the subject of this book, is **technique**. Everything from juicing those lemons properly, preparing your egg whites, and measuring the ingredients to how the drink is shaken, strained, and served in a perfectly chilled glass is as important as the recipe and ingredients you’ve selected.

As you might guess, there are plenty of books out there about recipes. And there are more and more volumes on bookstore shelves every day about cocktail ingredients. But this book aims to be among the first in what will hopefully become an ongoing conversation about technique.

I’VE ORGANIZED THE BOOK THE WAY I BUILD MY COCKTAILS

The chapters in this book are laid out a little differently than most other books. There is no chapter on vodka—in fact there are no chapters on alcohol at all. Instead, we have broken down the cocktail-making process as you would do it behind the bar. The first third of the book is all about prep: we’ll teach you how to get your juices ready, prepare your syrups, make your bitters, and produce your ice. Next we’ll show you how to put the drink together: how to measure and properly mix. And then we’ll show you how the drink is finished and served.

I’ve included a few of my favorite recipes, which I’ve collected over the years—my own, some of my friends’, and some of the best versions of the classics I’ve found—in order to illustrate some of the points we’re making about technique, and to show you how these techniques are applied.
CHAPTER NO 1
CITRUS JUICE

THE BRACING FOUNDATION OF A WIDE RANGE OF COCKTAILS

Every day at my bar, we typically juice in the neighborhood of one case of lemons, three-quarters of a case of limes, half a case of grapefruit, and half a case of oranges. That’s every single day. When I see how much citrus we go through on an average busy day and night, I think back to the first cocktail bar I worked in. It was the daytime bartender’s chore to head over to the grocery store across the street every morning and pick up a pack of Virginia Slims for the daytime cook, one of those big metal cans of grapefruit juice, and six limes and six lemons for garnishing gin and tonics and iced teas. And I remember clearly that at one point, the woman who was training me informed me that “limes and lemons are actually the same thing; limes are just unripened lemons.” That wasn’t really too long ago, but I feel like we’ve all come a long way.

Citrus is so ubiquitous in cocktails nowadays that it’s often taken for granted. Back when I came of age and started hanging around in bars, drinks were being made with canned, neon-green sour mix, and nobody thought twice about it. These days we shouldn’t think of using anything other than fresh-squeezed juice in our cocktails. And yet, as today’s craft bartenders turn their attention to things such as apothecary herbs and esoteric tinctures, the basic lemon or lime still doesn’t really get the attention it’s due.

Citrus was pretty much treasured by earlier civilizations; it was used as a source of perfume and other beauty products, as a medicine, and often in religious ceremonies. The satsuma, citron, and mandarin—three of the earliest ancestors of the citrus we know today—made their way from continent to continent, thanks to early explorers and traders (and sometimes conquerors, such as Alexander the Great, who was a big citron fan). Cultivation and consumption of the fruits spread from India to Persia (modern-day Iran), and eventually around the Mediterranean rim, including the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe.

Citrus made it to North America in the fifteenth century, supposedly arriving via Christopher Columbus (hey, at least he brought something other than just disease and genocide with him), and a half century later, explorer Ponce de León planted orange groves around St. Augustine, Florida. Those early trees have led to a multibillion-dollar orange industry in Florida.

The notion of mixing citrus with alcohol—which, as we’ve said, is a given nowadays—probably took millennia to catch on. Despite the use of citrus in pretty much every facet of daily life, the concept of citrus and alcohol didn’t really become widespread until the early seventeenth century, when mixing spirits with citrus and sugar took hold in Britain and its colonies.

Variations on lemon or lime juice mixed with alcohol—punch—were being sipped in drawing rooms around England, but the pairing caught fire globally once the British Royal Navy got a taste for it and realized, after much trial and error, that citrus could stave off scurvy in its sailors. The Royal Navy–made beverage became a staple, and as the British sailors traveled, so did punch. That combination of hot and sour—mitigated by sugar, water, and spices—seems to be something our human physiology responds favorably to, because so many cocktails still use citrus as their backbone.

Citrus in all its forms brings much to the party: quarters are muddled, peels are zested, oils are extracted, and wedges are squeezed over the top. But it’s the juice—sour, fresh, pungent, bracing juice—that brings the most to the world of cocktails. And so it’s absolutely critical that you know how to choose, store, and handle citrus fruit, and then coax out the best quality juice from it, if you’re going to be able to make a proper cocktail.

CHOOSING YOUR FRUIT

When we talk about citrus in cocktails, we’re mostly discussing limes, lemons, oranges, and grapefruits. But yuzu, Buddha’s hand, kumquats, and other exotics can all be found now in the modern bartender’s toolbox.

As with everything that you’ll use to make a cocktail, the first criterion when choosing citrus is freshness. With pretty much every other food type, I would advocate working with a local grower, but unless you’re living in a climate along the lines of California’s, Costa Rica’s, or Morocco’s, that may not be feasible.

Fortunately, most citrus has a moderately long shelf life and will stay bright and delicious for up to a week after you buy it. The specific characteristics that you need to look for when choosing citrus will depend on what you’re going to do with it. When we select citrus at our bar, we place the fruit into one of two categories: fruit for juicing or fruit for garnishes.
Citrus fruit that is to be juiced should be plump, on the soft side, and heavy for its size, with the thinnest and smoothest skin possible, which is an indication of more juice-producing contents. And a thin, supple skin just makes it easier to squeeze. The skin color of juice fruit doesn’t matter much; nor do a few blemishes. To evaluate fruit for juice, you need to heft quite a few to find the heavy, plump ones. For garnishes, I want citrus with thicker skin or a pebbled surface, and a bright, even color. I also want fruit that hasn’t been treated with pesticides and isn’t coated with wax. (Learn more about making and using citrus garnishes in chapter 12.) Unfortunately, you usually don’t get it all in the same piece of fruit, but for both juice and garnish fruit, choosing organic is always a good start.

**BUYING IN BULK**

The professional bartender has the convenience of a daily fresh produce delivery to the restaurant or barroom door. But this isn’t the case for the average, or home, bartender. When planning for just a few cocktails, sourcing citrus is just a matter of going to a decent grocery store. But if you’re planning a large event, or making cocktail components that use a lot of citrus (such as House Orange Bitters, page 138), having access to wholesale prices can make a big difference.

Some restaurant-supply wholesalers will sell to the general public, but finding them can take a little sleuthing. A good practice is to contact your favorite locally owned restaurant (chain restaurants often have their own internal supply avenues) or bar and ask whom they procure citrus from. Contact the front office of that particular distributor and ask if they’ll sell to the general public.

A far simpler alternative is to contact your local supermarket or grocer and simply ask the produce manager for bulk-buying options. Often a produce manager will be able to offer a discount for purchasing citrus by the case, so it never hurts to ask about your options there. Plan on ordering several days in advance.

Another option is finding a large Asian or Latin market, which can be found in most sizable cities. After just a short drive and a friendly conversation with the market’s produce manager, you may leave with a whole lot of fresh, gorgeous citrus at bargain prices. Plus, I find these markets offer an exciting array of other products that aren’t found at traditional American supermarkets. I enjoy browsing around them and gleaning inspiration for new cocktail combinations.

Once you get your fruit home or to your bar, you want to store it in a way that will keep it fresh, which in the case of citrus, is in the refrigerator. There’s a myth out there that chilling citrus will reduce the yield of juice, so some bartenders leave it on the counter, but you can trust me when I tell you that this is a load of bull. Check out the experiment we did on page 24.

**HOW MUCH JUICE CAN YOU EXPECT?**

Now that you’ve found a source for the least expensive, freshest citrus in your town, it’s time to determine how much to buy. Obviously, different varieties of citrus are going to yield different quantities of juice at different times of the year, but here’s a rough guide, which can at least help you make your shopping list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRUIT</th>
<th>AVERAGE YIELD OF JUICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lime</td>
<td>1 oz/30 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemon</td>
<td>1.5 oz/45 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meyer lemon</td>
<td>2 oz/60 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navel orange</td>
<td>3 oz/90 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapefruit</td>
<td>8 oz/240 ml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHOOSING THE RIGHT JUICER
The bartender has several choices of equipment to use when juicing fruit, and the choice will be a matter of what kind of fruit and how much juice is needed.

**HAND PRESSES**

The simplest option for juicing at home or in a small-scale bar program is what we refer to as a hand press (also called a clamshell-type) juicer. There are two main types, with minor stylistic differences between them. Both require the fruit to be placed cut-side down in the unit. At first, this seems counter-intuitive, given the shape of the juicer, but I repeat (probably several more times): **place the citrus cut-side down**.

The first type of hand press is an older style; it has no holes in its flat base, but merely a small reservoir around the cone and a pour spout on either or both sides. You place a half lemon or lime on the base cut-side down, swing the hinged top half over to embrace the fruit, and then squeeze the handles together to put pressure on the fruit and release the juice, which flows out of the pour spout.

Sadly, this type of press is nearly extinct, but vintage cast-iron or aluminum models can be found at online auction sites or antiques malls. The best ones were once made by Ebaloy, and I think they're worth seeking out for their ease of use and durability. As an aside, I would think twice before using one of these antiques in a professional bar setting, as antiques have a hard time handling repeated use.

The other, more common, type of hand press also consists of two parts hinged together. The base has holes in it to allow the juice to flow out, and the top half has a bulbous protrusion that pushes into the cut fruit and turns it onto itself so that the juice can flow through the holes. There are inexpensive cast-iron models from Mexico, which are usually fairly small. But, while good for juicing small limes, they may be worthless when you’re juicing anything larger.

The best all-around hand press is an enameled aluminum juicer made by Amco. They make four: a small green model meant for limes, a medium yellow model for lemons, and an orange model for, well, oranges. There’s also a two-in-one model with a plastic insert made for both lemons and limes—skip it. And also skip the green lime model as well. The lemon and orange models will suit all of your needs just fine; they cost about as much as a cheap bottle of wine.

But my favorite is a gorgeous solid stainless-steel juicer made by Norpro, which I’ve fallen in love with in recent years. It’s around three times the cost of the Amco enameled aluminum models, but if it’s style you’re going for, there is no rival.

**MECHANICAL PRESSES**

Moving up the technology scale, the mechanical citrus press, or manual stand juicer, is the go-to for bartenders looking to juice a larger amount of juice, for either a party or medium-scale cocktail program.

There are two basic types: The first is a gearless unit that operates with levers and has a handle mounted on the front. The most popular producer of this style is Ra Chand, which makes a variety of cast-aluminum juicers. While the lack of gears and interchangeable parts makes this type of juicer a sturdier, longer lasting piece of equipment than others, I find the front-mounted handle a bit clumsy; it’s difficult to get proper leverage unless you can position the juicer below counter or bar-top level.

The more common stand juicer used by the professional bartender is the Hamilton Beach 932 commercial citrus juicer. This is a side-mounted juicer with a geared handle and is by far the most comfortable to use for large jobs. The biggest drawback I find with this unit is that you can’t replace the gears and tighten the individual parts. If you’re going to be juicing a very large quantity of produce a day, plan on replacing the unit every three to six months. For the more casual user, it’ll last a good long while.

**ELECTRIC PRESSES**

The most complex type, an electric press, commonly referred to as an electric juicer, is also the best option for a program that will be serving a large number of guests. The initial cost is, obviously, higher than the preceding two types of manual juicers, but these commercial-grade juicers will endure years of abuse, many more than their manual counterparts.

**BARTENDER’S CHOICE: ELECTRIC JUICER**
My favorite electric juicer, and the one that’s widely preferred by professional bartenders, is the Sunkist juicer, model J1, which runs around $600/£650. This \( \frac{1}{4} \)-horsepower monster wrapped in a chrome-plated housing and topped with a domed plastic shell has been around for years, and it will be around for many more.
JUICING TECHNIQUE

When we talk about citrus behind the bar, we often use an earth-inspired metaphor: On either end of the (usually) oblong fruit is a “pole.” The stem end (North Pole) is where the fruit was formerly attached to the tree; that’s the end with the little brown nubbin. The stylar end (South Pole) is at the opposite end of the fruit, with no indentation or stem remainder, but often with a nipped end. The equator encircles the fruit and is equidistant from the North and South Poles.

CUTTING YOUR FRUIT FOR JUICING

All citrus to be juiced should be cut along the equator, perpendicular to the membranes that separate the individual segments inside. Bisecting in this direction opens the interior of the fruit completely and maximizes the juice extracted. If you’re prepping a lot of citrus for juicing, you can do this beforehand; there’s no need to cut each fruit immediately before juicing. Cut your fruit up to 2 hours before juicing, and keep it in the refrigerator once it’s been cut.

HOW TO JUICE CITRUS FRUIT WITH A HAND PRESS

You can juice citrus to make just a single cocktail using a process that the kitchen calls à la minute (pronounced ah lah mee-NOOT), which is a culinary term that basically means “to order.” In this case, you’ll juice the fruit using a hand press and then measure it directly in the jigger. (More about measuring in chapter 9.)
To use the modern hand press, or clamshell-type, juicer (such as the colorful ones), put your citrus half into the bottom half of the press, cut-side down. This might not feel correct at first, because the concave shape of the press makes you think you should nestle the fruit right into it, but you shouldn’t. Swing the top half over and squeeze the two together, over your glass or jigger. This will push the bulb in the top half into the citrus, in effect forcing it inside out as it squeezes out the juice.
However, the professional bartender or home entertainer will most often be preparing a larger quantity of juice in advance. There are several advantages to this: First, juicing a lot of citrus makes a mess, which you don’t necessarily want on display for your guests; keeping the bar looking clean and tidy is part of the job. Second, you can store your fresh-squeezed juice in plastic or glass bottles and then measure it out on a cocktail-by-cocktail basis, expediting the drink-making process—always a bonus when you’re faced with a large, thirsty crowd.

HOW TO JUICE IN VOLUME

When juicing in larger quantities, it’s really best to use a mechanical or electric press, although I have spent more occasions than I care to remember with a group of bartenders huddled around cardboard cases of precut citrus, hand pressing fast and furiously into a large bucket as we prepped for one event or another. It’s not fun, and it’s not pretty, but it works in a pinch.

Start by cutting all your citrus, and then set the mechanical or electric juicer in place. Next to the juicer, set a large container (a bowl or plastic bucket) and position a fine-mesh strainer over the top. The object of the strainer, and I feel very strongly about this, is to catch any pulp or seeds, leaving you with smooth, uniform citrus juice ready to be bottled.

Once you’ve juiced your fruit, seal it in clean bottles or containers, label it, refrigerate right away, and keep it as cold as possible.

HOW LONG WILL CITRUS JUICE STAY FRESH?
Fresh-squeezed juice changes over time, and strangely enough, that change doesn’t go in a straight line from fresh and delicious to old and stale. While all juice is very good in the first moments after you squeeze it, lemon, lime, and grapefruit are actually a bit better for cocktails once they’ve got a few hours of age on them. Orange juice is a different story, however.

Oranges contain flavorless substances called LARL (limonoate A-ring lactone) and NARL (nomilinoate A-ring lactone). During and after squeezing, those substances are converted by an enzyme, which is also present in oranges, into limonin, which is very bitter. The earlier in the season the fruit is picked, the more LARL and NARL there will be. Ideally, you should squeeze oranges to order, or definitely use the juice within an hour at most.

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**FRUIT JUICE** | **OPTIMAL AGE** | **MAXIMUM AGE**
---|---|---
Grapefruit | 4 to 12 hours | 48 hours
Lemon | 4 to 12 hours | 24 hours
Lime | 4 to 12 hours | 24 hours
Orange | 0 to 1 hour | 4 hours

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**GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR CITRUS**

There’s a lot of conjecture these days about which trick extracts the most juice from citrus fruit. Some people swear by rolling and pressing the fruit on the counter, to crush the juice sacs inside. Some think a warmer piece of fruit yields more juice than a straight-from-the-fridge one, and some people even recommend microwaving the citrus in order to extract more juice (I definitely passed on this method). Rolling the fruit and bringing them to room temperature both made sense to me in theory, but I’d never really investigated these options myself. So I set out to do a little experiment.

I gathered sixty lemons and divided them into four groups of fifteen lemons. I weighed each group of lemons, making small adjustments between the groups so that each group weighed more or less the same, and then I gave each group a different treatment.

**GROUP 1:** I left these in the refrigerator; this was to be my control group. After all, the fridge is where most of us at home (and all of us in the bar and restaurant business) keep our fruit.

**GROUP 2:** The second group I left out in a bowl on my kitchen counter overnight (about nine hours).

**GROUP 3:** I refrigerated these, but I also rolled the fruit firmly on the counter with the palm of my hand before juicing.

**GROUP 4:** This last group I left out in another bowl on the counter, but as with Group 3, I rolled them firmly on the counter before juicing. This last group was the one I had the most confidence in; after all, I’m applying both tricks, so this should give us the greatest yield, right?

When I was ready to juice, I recorded the average temperature of each group with a digital thermometer, and then I cut and juiced each group and strained, measured, and weighed the results.

The results were rather surprising. And if you take a close look at the results, you see some pretty good news: going through the extra step doesn’t make a whole heck of a lot of difference. You can keep the fruit fresher, colder, and spare yourself some effort—while still ending up with the best yield—by simply storing it in the fridge.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GROUP 1: REFRIGERATED, NOT ROLLED</th>
<th>GROUP 2: ROOM TEMPERATURE, NOT ROLLED</th>
<th>GROUP 3: REFRIGERATED, ROLLED</th>
<th>GROUP 4: ROOM TEMPERATURE, ROLLED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of lemons</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average temperature</td>
<td>43°F/6.1°C</td>
<td>67°F/19.4°C</td>
<td>45.7°F/7.6°C</td>
<td>65.7°F/18.7°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net weight before juicing</td>
<td>5.0 lb/2.3 kg</td>
<td>5.0 lb/2.3 kg</td>
<td>5.0 lb/2.3 kg</td>
<td>5.0 lb/2.3 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total volume of juice</td>
<td>31.95 oz/945 ml</td>
<td>31.78 oz/940 ml</td>
<td>29.72 oz/879 ml</td>
<td>30.50 oz/902 ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total weight of juice</td>
<td>2.19 lb/994 g</td>
<td>2.18 lb/992 g</td>
<td>2.05 lb/929 g</td>
<td>2.08 lb/942 g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of juice by weight</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juice per lemon</td>
<td>2.13 oz/63 ml</td>
<td>2.12 oz/62.6 ml</td>
<td>1.98 oz/58.6 ml</td>
<td>2.03 oz/60.1 ml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
End of this sample Kindle book.
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