



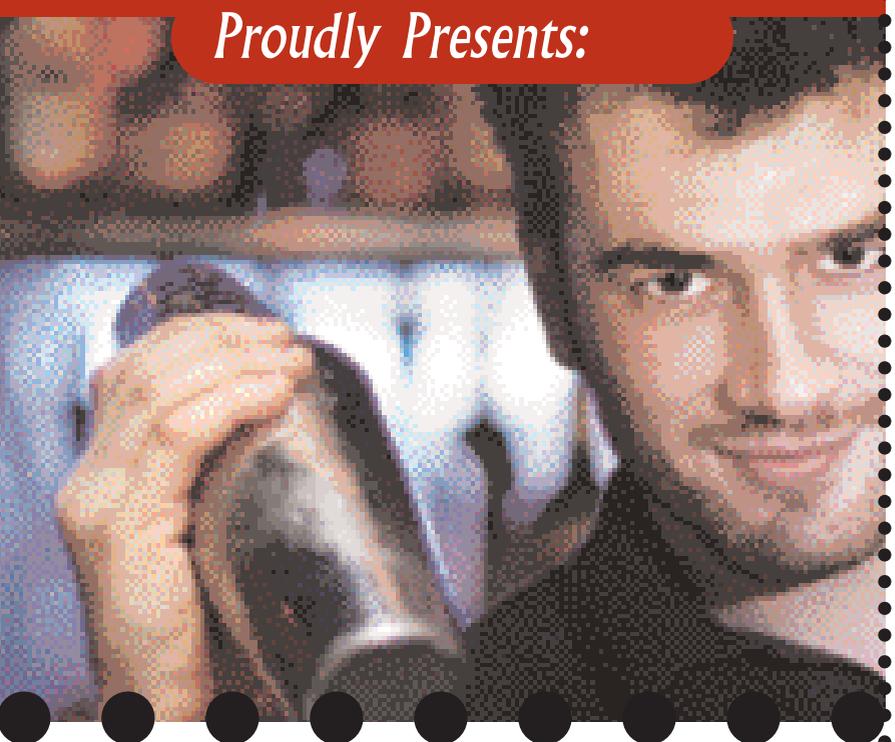
Raising the Bar



FOODSERVICE *news*
The Industry's National Newspaper



Proudly Presents:



THE SEMI-ANNUAL BEVERAGE MENU MAKE-OVER CONTEST

One lucky restaurant will win 2 days of hands-on staff and management training by master mixologist and renowned flair bartender Gavin MacMillan, focusing on:

- accuracy • speed • flair • cocktail synergy
- time management behind the bar • review of current menu and full menu makeover

Here's what to do: Complete the ballot below (one entry per establishment). Mail or fax your ballot to the coordinates listed below. We'll take care of the rest. Gavin will visit your restaurant to help your staff 'Raise the Bar.'

Name: _____

Establishment: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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Can you afford to train... Can you afford not to?

Do you have unexplained losses in liquor or wine, in draught beer... in all three? If your restaurant is like most hospitality concepts, chances are your current bartender training is based on generations of bartenders who may not have been fully trained themselves. Most restaurants open with meticulous operational guidelines for how drinks are prepared, with detailed recipe lists that must be strictly adhered to along with opening and closing procedures, weekly checklists for cleanliness and follow up procedures. Does this sound familiar? Maybe it's a distant memory...

What usually follows can be likened to a game of broken telephone, where each generation of bartenders passes on an adapted interpretation of your original training message. In the hospitality industry where employee turnover rates are commonly 50%-66% per year, it doesn't take long before your original training standards are barely recognizable.

Perhaps your restaurant is okay and you have a good idea of how you can control the margins in the kitchen. Most managers have a good handle on food cost in the kitchen because many kitchens have portion-controlled menus. Use of a scale to measure consistency in portion size is common especially in prep areas, but there is no parallel on the bar side of the spectrum. Most bartenders freepour, although few have been properly trained to freepour accurately. You ask them to use a shot glass, which is slow and really offers no guarantee of accuracy during busy periods.

In the hospitality industry, there is a fine line between profit and loss. So fine in fact that after tax, profit margins in F&B often average less than 3% according to recent figures.

With margins like that, it's hard to justify spending money on the business; however, it's been said that you have to spend it to make it. There are a smorgasbord of liquor control systems available... at a price, and keep in mind you get what you pay for. Some bars that choose the ball bearing style pour spouts, which apparently stop automatically, may save money up front but you'll pay in the long term. Most of these spouts will only pour accurately about 65% of the time. At the opposite end of the spectrum you could spend \$100,000 or more on a high-tech liquor control system, however it may take years to see the return on your investment. Both of these systems, no matter how elaborate the programming, will limit your bartenders' ability to create drinks that will truly satisfy your guests' unique tastes and preferences.

At the very least you should make sure that all of your pour spouts are the same, and that you don't have a mishmash of different colours, styles and pour rates. Not only does it look better, but if you find your liquor costs are out of



line at least there is one less variable, and you can let your bartenders know that they're pouring heavy.

The cost of not training your bartenders properly is astronomical.

All licensed establishments have bartenders but few have truly mastered the craft. But when was the last time your bartenders had any real training? Are they accurate and efficient or are they pouring away your profits?

The bottom line is that your ability to manage your costs is directly linked to the degree to which you empower your staff to help you manage those costs. We've all heard that the best defense is a good offense... consider this.

Keep things simple:

Based on \$10,000 in sales:

Your current liquor cost is 25% = \$2500

Your budget liquor cost is 23% = \$2300

Simple math says that you're running 2% above cost or at a 2% surplus.

Your target liquor cost is 22% = \$2200

This could be as a result of carelessness, spillage, spoilage, etc. As an incentive to keep costs in line, share these numbers with your staff regularly, and offer your bar team a quarterly party, or pay out a cash bonus to your bartenders if they hit a target 1% below your targeted liquor cost, in this case 22%. (Goals have to be within reason, and shouldn't promote short changing the guest.)

Each year, based on these numbers, you are rewarded with \$1200 in teambuilding and staff incentives. Your staff retention and job satisfaction goes up, turnover goes down and you empower a team of people to work toward meeting your budget goals. Win, Win.

Until next time, keep "Raising the Bar" in your establishment because if you don't someone else will. Cheers!



Gavin MacMillan is a master mixologist and bar chef, and owns BartenderOne Corp., Canada's fastest growing group of bartender training facilities. He is an award-winning flair bartender and published author and is considered one of Canada's leading authorities on cocktails and mixology. You can reach him at gavin@bartenderone.com.