



ABOVE

Isidoro – designed by Jean-Marie Massaud. In the original version it is an elegant container on wheels that opens like a book with an external handle and a click-to-close mechanism. The external covering is in Saddle leather and the shelves and drawers are in multi-layer poplar wood veneered in walnut. (www.poltronafrau.it)

often fairly large and flat – must look beautiful in their own right," says Bill Cleyndert, bespoke furniture maker, whose Portneuve liquor cabinet is in gesso and rosewood with chrome detailing (01485 528822; www.bill-cleyndert.com). When doors are opened, there should be a sturdy surface for pouring/mixing drinks, which must be high enough to stand at comfortably. A bar, on the other hand, generally stands away from the wall with room both sides: the one for serving/mixing, the other for standing, leaning or sitting on tall stools, as the bar needs to be at worktop height and sufficiently robust to cope with spills and stains.

Bars are even getting cutting edge. French designer Jean-Marie Massaud (tipped by some as the next Philippe Starck) showed his Isidoro for Poltrona Frau in Milan. "The drinks cabinet has become a sign of style," he says. His version looks like a tall cabin trunk stood on end. You can wheel it anywhere in the room, then tug its luggage-like handle so that it opens to reveal an interior fitted with glass and drink holders, and a fold-out shelf for serving drinks (www.poltronafrau.it).

Also at the forefront of French design is Sacha Ladic, who has designed (for Roche-Bobois) a deliberately

curvy bar "so you can place it anywhere in the room. The organic shape – like a leaf or a tear drop – makes it really 'loose'. I imagine it being placed centrally, not against a wall. People are standing up so they can move around and get close to each other, creating intimacy. It's all part of the home cocooning trend – people preferring to stay at home and welcome their friends, rather than going out." (www.roche-bobois.com)

But the most beautiful – and expensive – bars and cocktail cabinets will be bespoke. And a new book (appropriately called *Bespoke*), tells you where to go, listing 150 British designer furniture makers. Author Betty Norwood has been curating her Celebration of Craftsmanship and Design exhibitions for 14 years (the last one was in August in Cheltenham: catalogues still available at £3.50 inc p&p). Of the 670 illustrations in her book, several are cocktail cabinets. "Many more craftsmen these days are making cabinets and bars to order," Norwood reports. "This piece of furniture is quite a challenge – it has to stand alone and look beautiful, but inside it has to function really well, providing somewhere stable and easy to clean to serve drinks, plus intricately-planned storage. The result is truly interactive."



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In his recent re-vamp of Claridges, the luxury Mayfair hotel, Royal furniture-maker, David Linley has transformed those bleak ubiquitous mini-bar boxes into free standing glamorous drinks cabinets. (Linley showrooms are in SW1 and W1 020 7730 7300 www.davidlinley.com)

RIGHT

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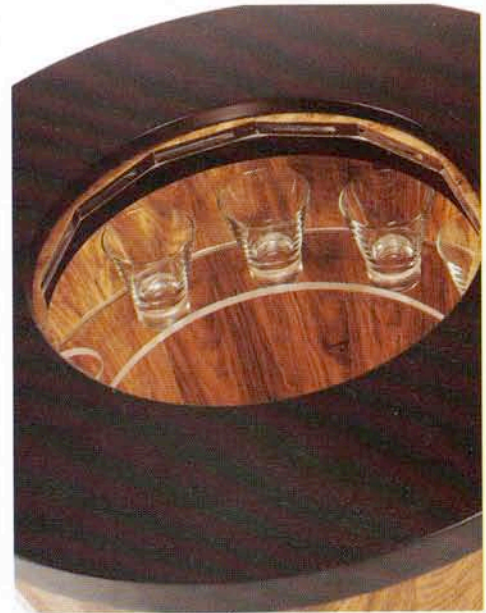
USEFUL TIPS

Have plenty of storage for bottles of various shapes and sizes, plus decanters. Tall glasses suit long drinks made with soda or coke. Short ones are for strong "shots".

Other bar essentials include wine, beer and sherry glasses. Champagne flutes have a small surface area to keep things bubbling. The quintessential Martini glass is an inverted straight-side triangle with a long stem to stop the drink warming up...

A cocktail is essentially a mix of spirits (whisky, gin, vodka, rum), liqueur and juice (fresh where possible). Other ingredients are crushed ice, sparkling wines, sodas, vermouth, bitters, sugars and honey. Garnishes include olives, silverskin onions and/or cherries and all kinds of fruit and herbs.

Methods include stirring, blending, and shaking. Essential equipment is a Boston shaker – a glass and metal container which fits tightly together. Also remember tongs, buckets, a funnel, measures, jugs, spoons, stirrers, a corkscrew, a bottle opener, straw dispenser, lemon zester, knives/peelers, chopping board, tea towels, trays, apron, ashtrays, strainer, a waste bin and a smoke alarm....cheers!



(Bespoke costs £39 plus £3 p&p from 01242 238582; betty.norbury@virgin.net)

Clients who know exactly what they want may demand a built-in bar. It makes sense, then, to use a kitchen company, for a bar, after all, is not a lot different from an island unit.

"A home bar is a real must these days, says Jane Stewart, design director for Mowlem & Co, bespoke kitchen makers with showrooms in London, Knutsford, and Newcastle. "And it's definitely possible to stay chic – without the Vera Duckworth touch or the Spearmint Rhino look." Stewart's favourite cocktail recipes include Glacier White Corian tops with built-in ice troughs and integral sinks, instant boiling water, an ultra smart KWC Eve Luminaqua tap with LED light ring, Italianate chandeliers, and walls clad in statuary-class A marble. "Or go for a warmer club feel, with sumptuous alternating wood veneers, riven stone tops, leather walls and floor lights." Cocktails need crushed ice, so have a freezer full of pre-purchased, then pre-bag it and store in the small undercounter unit you have fitted in the bar." Increasingly popular for the home bar is a built-in chilled unit for wine storage.

To contact Mowlem, call 020 7610 6626; or go to www.mowlem.co.uk.

The cocktail cabinet was in its heyday in the 1930s, and you can still find glamorous deco versions at specialist dealers, including bars that stand away from the wall. Expect to pay around £1,500. Look for example on www.cloud9artdeco.co.uk, and on www.deco-world.com.

Newly-revamped Alfies Antique Market in Church Street, London NW8 is huge with over a hundred dealers, including several furniture specialists (www.alfiesantiques.com)

Alternatively, consider having an oriental or Indian cabinet adapted to take drinks and glasses – "we do this all the while," says Jemma Page, director of Orchid, Chinese furniture specialists (01264 811111; www.orchidfurniture.co.uk)

PS Don't forget ice maker/crusher, tongs, buckets, funnel, measures, jugs, shakers, spoons, stirrers, corkscrew, bottle opener, glass rimmer, straw dispenser, spoons, lemon zester, knives/peelers, chopping boards, tray, coffee maker, juicer, strainer, liquidiser, waste bin.

ABOVE

'Iris' in brown oak by Toby Howes
The Iris opens by turning the top to reveal an illuminated storage area for bottles and glasses (Bespoke Gallery, 01242 238582 www.celebrationofcraftsmanship.com www.bespokegallery.co.uk)