

JIM MEEHAN
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
CHRIS GALL



THE **PDT**



THE
COMPLETE
BARTENDER'S GUIDE
FROM THE CELEBRATED SPEAKEASY



THE PDT
COCKTAIL BOOK

The logo features the words "THE PDT" in a large, bold, serif font with a horizontal-line texture. The word "THE" is smaller and positioned to the left of "PDT". Below this, a ribbon banner curves across the page with the words "COCKTAIL BOOK" written in a smaller, serif font.



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FOREWORD

One year in the early 1990s, I gave my wife Karen a copy of the classic *Savoy Cocktail Book* for Christmas, along with a bottle of maraschino and one or two other then-obscure cocktail ingredients. I won't say it was a life-changing gift, but we sure made a lot of classic cocktails that year, or at least tried to. There was no such thing as a "cocktail geek"—if you really liked your Martinis, Manhattan Jack Roses, and such, about the best thing you could hope to be called was a WASP. The *Savoy*, at least, didn't treat you like an undergrad or a moron; and with its whimsical drawings throughout, it was so beautiful that you didn't care if you were getting things wrong.

But now it's practically a generation later, and we've got geeks and blogs and tweets and—Lolita knows—we've got cocktail books. I myself have written four of them, and that's the tiniest drop in the shaker. We've got historical ones, like mine, colorful ones, technical ones, personal ones, local ones, big ones, small ones, and ones that practically mix your drinks for you. But what we don't have, or should say *didn't* have, is one that does what the *Savoy* book did in 1930: a book that perfectly encapsulates what we drink in bars today in a way that's both timelessly elegant and concisely and efficiently contemporary. I believe Jim Meehan has written that book, with the invaluable assistance of Chris Gall's illustrations.

Jim is uniquely qualified to pull such an enterprise off. In part, that's because as the behind-the-scenes proprietor of one of the nation's most celebrated cocktail mills, he has seen the pickiest tipplers in the country—in the world, even—sit before him on a nightly basis and has sent them away satisfied. In part it's also because for the last five years, he has edited *Food & Wine* magazine's annual cocktail book. Mostly, though, it's because of who he is. The *Savoy* book became one of the great classics of mixology because Harry Craddock, its author, was a working bartender who didn't make such a big deal out of himself. His book was full of everybody's drinks, not just his. Jim, too, is a working bartender who doesn't make such a big deal out of himself. He's a humble, down-to-earth guy who, despite his success and fame, has no problem sharing the spotlight.

Every drink here is credited to its creator and where that person is known, or at least its source. He has also taken cues from a couple of other important milestones in the literature of the bar, Harry Johnson's 1888 *Bartender's Manual* and the 1907 *Hoffman House Bartender's Guide*, and explained how he does what he does, both for the house mixologist and in particular for the person who runs, or wants to run, a bar. Ingredients are discussed, detailed, and sourced. Tools and techniques are explicated—even when those techniques involve frying mayonnaise and infusing bourbon with bacon—and any other crazy thing Jim's crew of mad geniuses at PDT have come up with. There's even an annotated bibliography, so you can figure out where to go from here. Paging through *The PDT Cocktail Book*, taking in the wealth of detail in this lovely book, all I can do is think "I wish I had written this." Oh, and envy the young couple who gets this book as their first serious cocktail guide. They're going to have a good year.



DAVID WONDRIK

INTRODUCTION



It all began in 1995. While studying literature by day as a college student in Madison, Wisconsin, I worked in bars at night to pay for school. After seven glorious years and a couple of liberal arts and science degrees, I moved to New York City to further my studies as a bartender. Although the style of bar I've tended in Manhattan compared to Madison represents a Tale of Two Cities, my work ethic and my approach to the profession remains thoroughly Midwestern.

A year after I arrived, a visit to Sasha Petraske's famous speakeasy, Milk & Honey, centered my focus on cocktails. In 2004, I introduced myself to Audrey Saunders, who added me to the opening roster of her pioneering bar, the Pegu Club. My learning curve soared working under Dale DeGroff's protégé and alongside St. John Frizell, Toby Maloney, Brian Miller, Sam Ross, Chad Solomon, and Phil Ward. I worked one night a week in SoHo and spent the other five rounding out my skill set behind the bar at Gramercy Tavern.

In 2007, Brian Shebairo hired me to help him open a bar in my neighborhood. A singular New York City experience, to enter PDT, you descend four stairs on St. Marks Place into a hot dog stand, hook your hand left into a phone booth, pick up the receiver, and dial. Moments later, the back of the booth opens and you're whisked into a shoebox-shaped lounge. The dimly lit, taxidermy-adorned bar is typically brimming with customers who sip cocktails from ice-cold coupes and nosh on deep-fried hot dogs and tater tots.

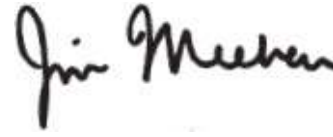
The dogs came before the drinks. Brian opened Crif Dogs, a New Jersey-style hot dog stand, six years before acquiring the adjacent space and connecting the two with a vintage phone booth and a portico between the counter and bar. Serving Crif Dogs at PDT turned out to be one of our best decisions. The East Village-friendly fast food provides a perfect foil to the handcrafted cocktails, grounding the experience by providing earthly and ethereal offerings together.

A few months after we opened, the concept evolved. We expanded the eleven-drink laminated card into a leather-bound book filled with twice as many creative concoctions. In addition to more drinks, a handful of the neighborhood's top chefs began supplying condiments for our dogs. From the beginning, I chronicled the stories behind each offering, hoping that the opportunity to share them all together might present itself.

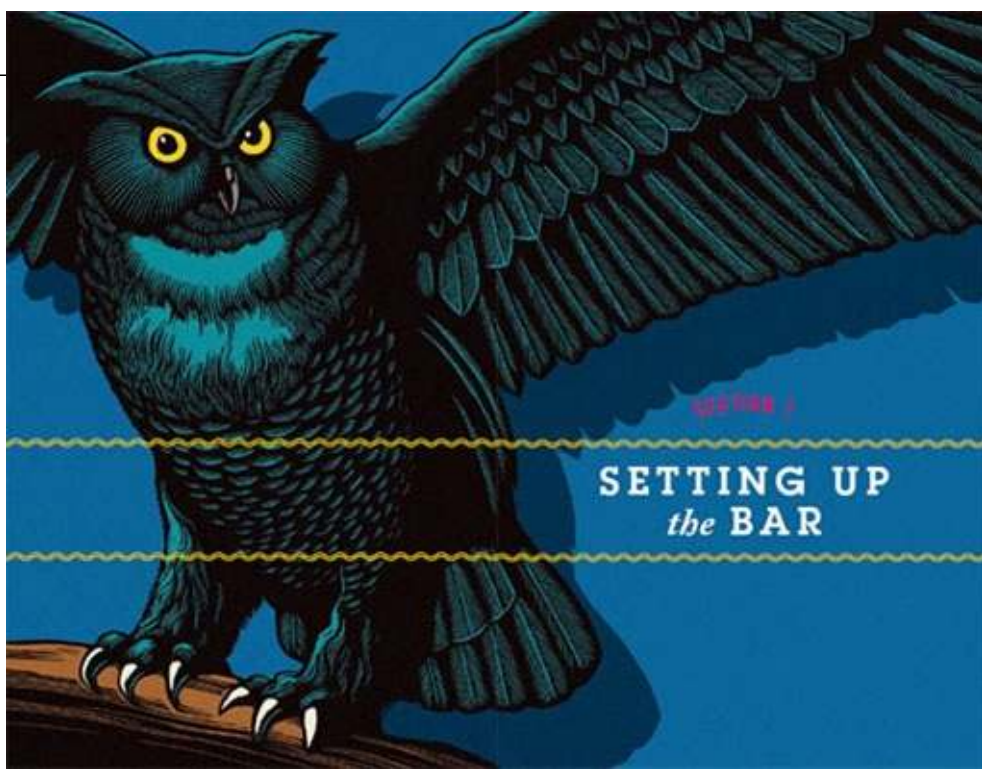
After gazing at Chris Gall's famous fish, a NYC Subway Art installation, while riding the 6 train in 2009, I contacted Chris to see if he'd consider illustrating a cocktail book. I wanted to bottle the look

feel, and attitude of contemporary cocktail culture classically, with a playful sense of humor. Our goal is for the artwork, alongside the stories, to transport you like sipping a well-made cocktail.

Hopefully, paging through this book will demystify mixology, spirits, and cocktails and inspire you to pick up a shaker. However, just like going out to a bar, I intended this book to be used for entertainment purposes. If preparing these drinks at home or hiring a cab to PDT seems like a stretch, flip through the book and enjoy Chris's illustrations. We taste with our eyes first.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Meehan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

JIM MEEHAN



SETTING UP
the BAR

Whenever I visit a new bar, I evaluate how it works from a design standpoint: form follows function. Each bar has its own traffic patterns, and these determine the flow of service. I remember walking into PDT in 2007 when it was still a construction site and seeing all the design elements needed to run the bar successfully. Crif Dogs owner Brian Shebairo, his old friend Chris Antista, handyman Steve Seligman, and cabinetmaker Archie McAlister designed everything but the workstations using elements of classic bar design and characteristics of some of the best cocktail bars in Manhattan. Did you mention you enter the bar through a phone booth?

The effect of walking into a raucous hot dog stand, stepping into a phone booth, and emerging into a quiet, dimly lit cocktail lounge is the bar's most talked-about feature, and it was designed that way by necessity. In 2003, before the Lower East Side swelled with bars and restaurants, Brian acquired a liquor license for Crif Dogs that was used for a brief time to purchase spirits to serve in a frozen drink machine. As more bars opened in the neighborhood, the community board, whose blessing is needed to acquire a liquor license, began halting new applications. To capitalize upon his underutilized license, Brian leased the space next door, gutted it, and built the bar. He avoided having to apply for a new license by forgoing a street entrance in favor of a hidden door in Crif Dogs.

The *Get Smart* phone booth was in keeping with Crif style; the only question was how the hot dog stand's loyalists would feel about a fancy cocktail bar next door. The simple solution was to serve hot dogs; so a portal was built between the counter at Crif Dogs and the back bar. To bolster street credibility, Brian commissioned East Village artist Jim Powers to tile the bathrooms from floor to ceiling with broken mirror glass and decorated the bar with taxidermy and framed artwork from Billy's Antiques on Houston Street. The decor retained elements of Crif Dogs' punk East Village vibe, and the spacious booths, natural woods, and exposed brick wall gave the place a luxurious feel that made you want to stay for another drink.

While Brian focused on completing the build-out, I worked with my opening managers (John Derago and Don Lee) to design workstations that the staff could rely on to accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently. We built a small host station to the right of the entrance so guests could be greeted when they entered and thanked when they exited. A waitstation with a computerized ordering system and plenty of storage space was perched where the waiter could see the entire floor and place orders quickly. The service bar was designed with room for a sink, plenty of shelving, glassware, and garnishes. The lion's share of our attention was spent behind the bar, where two independent drink wells, complete with custom sinks and shaker rinsers, were installed.

Good bar design is evolutionary. The backlit glass bar top that we opened with leaked, so we covered it with copper. A couple months after we opened, the bar station near the entrance was repositioned to face the wall and the refrigerator was downsized to make room for a glass chiller. In year two, the bright green floor was stained mahogany, the veneered tables were replaced with solid silver maple, antique lights replaced custom light boxes, and a sink was installed in the service bar. Every day Brian and I think about how the space could be improved, and we encourage our staff to do the same. Little things like how we store glassware and where we situate our shakers affect the bottom line.

The following diagrams offer a detailed overview of our bar's unique design features. The compact space forces us to use every inch for storage and drink preparation intelligently. I've included these drawings because most cocktail bars are woefully outfitted to serve drinks quickly due to poor design and a lack of essential equipment. Hopefully, these sketches will provide prospective and current bar operators a better idea of how a cocktail bar's workstations need to be set up. Proper merchandizing, bottle storage, space for glassware, dry goods storage, refrigeration for mixers, custom sinks, and a glasswasher are essential. Regardless of the good intentions of the bartender or owner, if it takes too long to get a drink, guests won't order them—or, worse, they won't come back.

BAR EXTERIOR

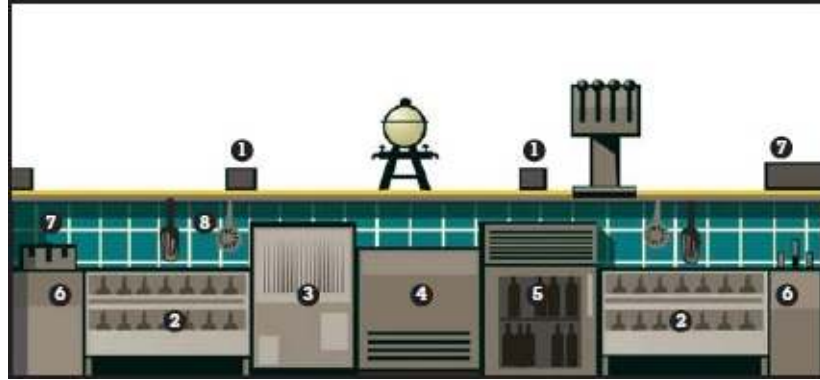
PDT's bar retains many elements of nineteenth-century taverns, such as ornamental wood paneling, tiered shelving, a mirrored back bar, and a symmetrical layout. The handmade absinthe fountain, antique tantalus decanter set perched on top of the tap beer tower, and worn copper bar top add character and class. Unusual elements, such as the food passage connecting the counter at Crif Dogs and PDT and the security camera monitor, mounted below the cash register, entertain our guests and give them something other than the drinks to remark upon.



1|Hooks for purses and bags 2|Brass footrail 3|Spill bumper wraps around the bar 4|Proportioned bar top
5|Food pass between Crif Dogs counter and PDT 6|Mirrors function like eyes in the back of a bartender's head 7|Bottom lit shelves illuminate bottles
8|Liquor is displayed above the bar top, glassware and supplies below 9|Important utilities are centrally located

BAR INTERIOR

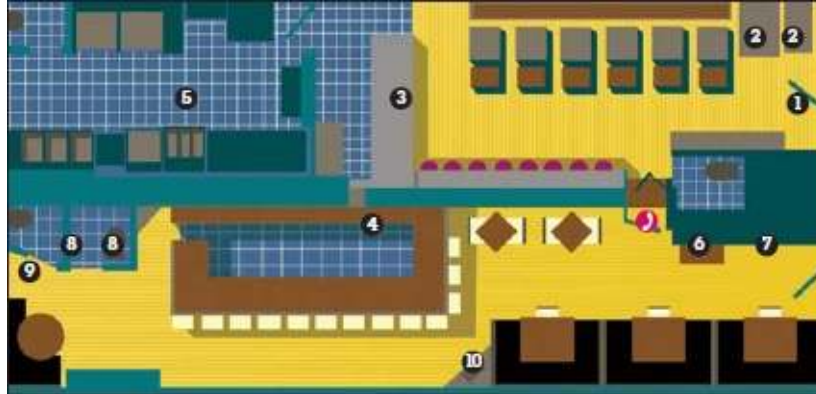
The configuration of the interior of a modern cocktail bar has undergone significant modification over the last ten years. Inspired by modern kitchen design, we built our bar stations so most everything is within arm's reach. The speed rails are stocked with bottles required to make the drinks on the menu. Glasses are stored in the chiller, with backups placed on shelves underneath the back bar. Each station has compartmentalized ice storage and its own sink to rinse shakers and mixing glasses between uses. The bar's undercarriage is illuminated from above and tiled from floor to bar top for easy cleaning and drainage.



- 1|Custom stainless steel cocktail napkin boxes
- 2|Two double speed rails
- 3|Centrally located dishwasher
- 4|Centrally located glass chiller
- 5|Refrigerator for vermouth, wine, soda, back up juice, cream, and eggs
- 6|Custom sink with built-in strainer
- 7|Custom-insulated stainless steel garnish tray
- 8|Hooks to hang strainers and a basket to hold the ice scoop

113 ST. MARKS PLACE

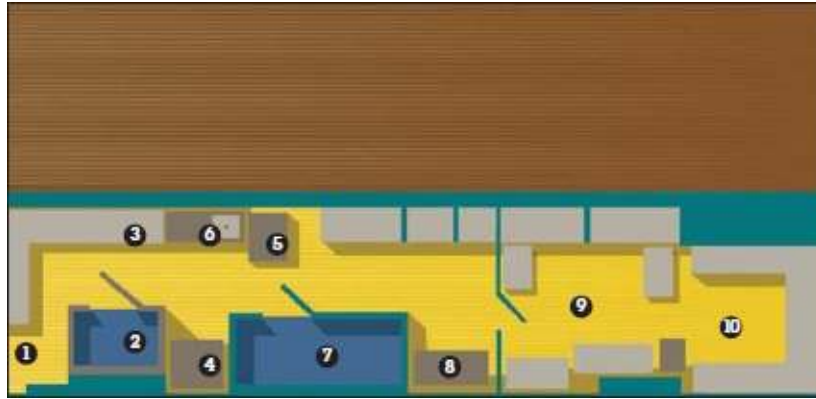
To enter PDT, you must walk past the video games at Crif Dogs and veer left into the phone booth. After you ring, the host opens the wall of the booth, confirms your reservation, and seats you. Banquettes help secure guests' privacy, providing comfortable, spacious, well-lit places to sit for groups up to eight. Service stations are placed in strategic locations so all members of the staff work close to their primary responsibility. The pass between the counter and the bar allows us to serve hot food from Crif Dogs at PDT. An outdoor entrance to the basement maximizes the footprint of the barroom.



1|Street entrance to Crif Dogs 2|Video games 3|Crif Dogs counter 4|Food pass between counter and bar 5|Crif Dogs kitchen 6|Host station next to phone booth entrance 7|Coat and bag check 8|PDT bathrooms 9|Exit to the backyard and basement 10|Wait station

THE BASEMENT

Since there is very little space to work with, most of the basement is outfitted with stainless steel shelving for dry goods and refrigeration for produce, beer, wine, and frozen food. Rotating perishable ingredients in and out quickly, maintaining a clean prep area, and an easily accessible inventory are vital to remain profitable. We lease the apartment above the bar to deter noise complaints and provide our office managers with plenty of space to store merchandise and take care of the mountain of accounting required to run each business.



1|Staircase from the backyard 2|Walk-in freezer 3|Dry storage for wines, canned beer, infusions, tea
4|Kold-Draft ice machine 5|Scotsman ice machine 6|Sink and prep area 7|Walk-in refrigerator 8|Soft
refrigerator 9|Liquor room 10|Glassware storage



GLASSWARE



Glassware is one of the most overlooked elements of a cocktail, which is composed of liquid, ice, garnish, and the glass it's served in. We taste with our eyes first, so it's essential that a cocktail be served in a handsome glass. We chill all our clean polished glasses before serving a drink in them. When PDT opened, we chose expensive stems, whose thin glass chipped and cracked with regular use. Subsequently, we've replaced them with tempered stemware that can stand up to repeated wear and tear. Glassware should reflect a bar's personality: here's what we use at PDT.



9 oz.
Absinthe Glass



5.5 oz.
Coupe



11.5 oz.
Wine Glass



8 oz.
Champagne Flute



10 oz.
Collins Glass



9 oz.
Egg Coupe



8 oz.
Fizz Glass



10 oz.
Heatproof Mug



14 oz.
Mule Cup



12 oz.
Julep Cup



5 oz.
Nick & Nora



12 oz.
Pilsner Glass



13 oz.
Rocks Glass



14 oz.
Tiki Mug



1.5 oz.
Shot Glass



12 oz.
Water Glass



5 oz.
Spirit Glass



Bar Towel



BAR TOOLS



As bartending has evolved over the last decade, a handful of cocktail bartenders have imported and helped design better tools to get the job done. Professional barware has helped reposition bartending alongside cooking as a noble trade in America. Until recently, many of the items on this list were unavailable in the United States and difficult to source. Like cooks in a starred restaurant, the top bartenders bring their favorite tools to work. Here are the tools we stock behind the bar at PDT.



Absinthe Spoon



Absinthe Fountain



Atomizer



Bar Spoons



Bitters Bottles



16 oz. Blue Blazer Mugs



18 oz. and 28 oz. Boston Shaker



Champagne Stopper



Channel Knife



Citrus Press



Cobbler Shaker



Cutting Board



Fine Strainer



Funnel



Garnish Spoons



Ice Cube Tray



Ice Pick



Ice Scoop



Jiggers
1 oz / 2 oz and .5 oz / .75 oz



Julep Strainer



Knives



Lewis Ice Bag
and Mallet



Measuring Cup



Measuring Spoons



Microplane Spice
and Citrus Graters



Mixing Glass



Muddler



Y-Peeler



Pour Spouts



Swizzle Stick



EQUIPMENT



Pre-Prohibition cocktails served in antique glasses by bartenders sporting turn-of-the-twentieth-century garb were quite fashionable in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Anachronistic bartenders brought analog practices to the digital world with the help of modern machinery to maintain the illusion. Nowadays, the combination of Golden Age methodology and modern machinery is employed by the best cocktail lounges to create contemporary cocktails. Besides the various refrigerators needed to chill wine, beer, mixers, and produce, here's a selection of machinery we use on a daily basis at PDT.



Scotsman NME 454 Modular Air & Water Cooled Nugget Ice Machine



Kold Draft Ice GB1060 Full Sized Ice Cube Machine



Ruby 2000 Juice Extractor



Sunkist Commercial Juicer



True T-24-CC-S 24" Class Froster



AND HL-4000 Digital Scale

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