

# *Y'all Come Over*

Charming Your Guests with New Recipes,  
Heirloom Treasures, and True Southern Hospitality



REBECCA LANG

*Rizzoli*





## On the Bar

It's true that when the bar runs dry, the party ends. It's the case in the South and just about everywhere else. The bar is the first place that guests will go once they arrive and quite possibly the place they visit most often during the festivities. From self-serve with a few choices to a professional on hand shaking and stirring, there is a lot of leeway on how a bar is set up. As the host, take comfort that your guests will appreciate the libations, no matter the method in which they are served.

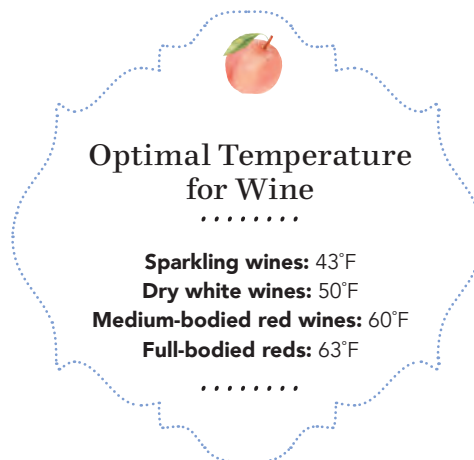
# Stocking the Bar

## Always Be Ready: Red, White, and Bubbles

**W**ine is always around at my house and rarely would a guest be over for more than a few minutes without being offered a glass. I try to keep a few different varietals, even those that aren't our favorites, since friends may prefer something different than what Kevin and I normally pour for ourselves.

Have a couple of bottles of red, white, and sparkling at all times. If you have room, and I sincerely hope you do, keep a bottle of rosé or two within reach. Ask a guest, even if just dropping by, what they prefer and what you will be able to provide. Many homes can't spare several inches of refrigerator space to keep wines constantly chilled. If that's the case, there's an easy method of chilling wine quickly. Submerge the bottle in salty ice water, give it a spin or two, and in about 10 minutes, you have perfectly chilled wine.

Surprisingly, almost no wine is best at room temperature. They all deserve a slight cooling to be served at the optimal temperature.





## Super-fast Chilling

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## Wine Etiquette

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- Fill wine glasses about  $\frac{1}{3}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  full.
  - Fill Champagne glasses about  $\frac{2}{3}$  full.
  - Pour about an inch into the glass and allow the froth to settle before finishing the pour.
  - Pourer lifts the glass of wine to refill, not the guest being refilled.
  - Offer a clean glass when a guest is switching to a different wine.
  - A stemmed glass should be held from the stem.
  - Wine brought by a guest does not have to be opened. Opening is only required if the guest was asked to bring wine.
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## Choosing the Perfect Wines

Don't overthink choosing wine for your party. Always serve something you have tasted and offer both a choice of at least one red and one white. Most people don't want a wine lesson on what they're about to drink at a party. So, choose wines that taste great and are approachable. Big wines like Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are less likely to be easy sipping for guests. I often go more casual and choose wines that can be enjoyed just as much without food as with it, so they tend to be less robust. These go-to grapes and regions create wines that appeal to wide audiences and are easily found in wine shops and markets. Below are some options to help get you started.

### White

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French Muscadet  
 New Zealand's  
 Sauvignon Blanc  
 Austrian dry Riesling  
 (If it's dry, the label will  
 include the term  
 "trocken.")

### Red

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Pinot Noir from Oregon  
 Beaujolais-Villages  
 from France  
 French Côtes du Rhône

### Rosé

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Choose one from  
 Italy, France, or  
 Long Island, NY



## How to Open a Bottle of Bubbly

Remove the foil cover, then loosen and remove the cage. Place a kitchen towel or linen napkin over the cork. Twist the bottle, not the cork, until the cork pops out. The napkin will prevent the cork from flying away. It is thought that the less noise a cork makes on opening, the more skilled the opener is.

## How to Open a Bottle of Wine

A waiter's corkscrew is the easiest way to remove a cork. Remove the foil cover. Place the corkscrew spiral (called the worm) in the center of the cork, and turn clockwise. Use the first notch of the corkscrew (called the step) onto the lip of the bottle. Use the step as leverage to pull the cork about halfway out of the bottle. The second step of the corkscrew is used to remove the cork the remainder of the way out of the bottle. If the cork breaks, remove the section that broke off and try the steps above with the remainder of the cork. If the cork can't be removed, push the cork into the bottle. Strain the wine before serving.

## Southern Home Bar Echelons

No matter your budget or the size of your liquor cabinet (or bar cart or TV tray), there is a level of bar stocking that will meet your needs. If you're just starting out, begin small and add new bottles as your cocktail repertoire expands and your budget allows. The general rule I follow is to buy the best you can afford. If you haven't learned by now, opting to buy the cheapest bottle on the shelf will usually come back to haunt you and your guests the next day.



Starting out with your first bar is exciting! Think of it as a collection that takes a while, sometimes years, to acquire as much variety as you want. And luckily, even the ones you purchase first will last. Spirits have an incredibly long shelf life. Before the bottle is opened, most alcohol will last indefinitely. Once spirits are opened, they do start to react to oxygen that will, over time, dull the flavor. Store your new bar stock in a dark and cool place (60°F is ideal), if possible. To save on all things that go with the bar, look for glassware at vintage shops and things like cocktail picks at dollar stores.



### Beginner: Basically Spirited

- » Gin
- » Vodka
- » Bourbon



## Intermediate: Well-Stocked

- » Gin
- » Vodka
- » Bourbon
- » Tequila
- » White Rum



When amping up your bar with a few more choices, consider sourcing them not far from home. Southern small batch distilleries are opening up in almost every state with impressive results. No matter your taste, there is likely a Southern version on the shelf—corn whiskey, gin with native botanicals, grain vodka, absinthe, liqueurs, even legit moonshine that won't land in you trouble with the law.





Some additional home bar accessories can take even an elite bar to a professional level. Ice freezing trays that make large cubes or balls of ice (they melt slower than smaller ones) are great for "on the rocks" drinkers. A crystal mixing glass with strainer and cocktail spoon are a gem for making one cocktail at a time. Solid wooden muddlers are pretty and bruise the leaves of herbs just enough for their flavor to be released. Sterling silver ice scoops and engraved bottle openers both round out the luxurious Southern bar.

### Advanced: Ready for Anything

- ⇒ Cognac
- ⇒ Gin
- ⇒ Vodka
- ⇒ Bourbon
- ⇒ Canadian whiskey
- ⇒ Rum (white and dark)
- ⇒ Tequila
- ⇒ Scotch
- ⇒ Red and white vermouth (Store in the fridge up to two months.)
- ⇒ Bitters (These help the flavors blend, but don't really add a bitter taste.)
- ⇒ Cointreau





BARSMIT  
ESSENTIALS FOR  
MIXOLOGISTS  
Canadian  
WHISKY  
ALL STRUP  
QUALITY INGREDIENTS  
1 oz. (375ml)

## Mixers

Mixers depend on the cocktails you plan on serving and what you like to drink. Since they don't have the shelf life and expense that alcohol does, it's easy to change them up often. Look for small bottles so leftovers don't lose fizz and have to be discarded. Use carafes, pretty bottles, or even vintage jars to spruce up mixers to a fancier level. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- ⇒ Tonic water
- ⇒ Diet tonic water
- ⇒ Cold filtered water
- ⇒ Ice (If serving cocktails shaken and served over ice, plan on 1 pound of ice per person.)
- ⇒ Ginger ale
- ⇒ Cola
- ⇒ Lemon-lime soda
- ⇒ Juices: tomato, pineapple, cranberry, orange
- ⇒ Wedges of lemons and limes
- ⇒ Slices of oranges
- ⇒ Olives
- ⇒ Festive salt for rimming glasses

## Nonalcoholic Options

No party should be held without a nonalcoholic choice at the bar. This drink needs to be just as pretty, if not more so, and inviting as any cocktail offered. The same type of glasses should be used for both nonalcoholic and every other drink. You can be as elaborate as you want with club soda, fruit juice, and sprigs of fresh herbs. Water should always be an option before the meal is served and certainly served during dinner. A meal without water on the table is one that will end in overserved guests.



### Make Your Own Salt Blend

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Making your own salt blend for rimming glasses takes just minutes and offers a pretty finish. Try mixing kosher salt with chili powder, finely grated orange zest, or smoked paprika.

