

Basic Tools

There are tons of cool cocktail toys. You can easily become Amazon's favorite customer! So if you're trying to stay on budget and not overfill your cabinet, keep it simple.

There are a few tools designed specifically for the bar. The rest are general kitchen items. Try to obtain the highest quality tools you can afford. Cheap tools won't last as long and always end up costing more. Here is my list of essential tools:

1. Boston Shaker
2. Barspoon – it's not just a long teaspoon.
3. Measuring device
4. Strainer
5. Bottle opener
6. Wine bottle opener (I assume that if you're into craft cocktails, you're not into boxed wine!)
7. Paring knife
8. Small cutting board
9. Handheld juicer
10. Muddler – possibly optional, depending on what you plan to make
11. Fine mesh strainer – optional

The Boston Shaker



This is the shaker with the pint glass and tin. I prefer it to the Cobbler which is the 3 piece tin, top and cap variety. I think it's easier to take apart and the pint glass can be used for a mixing glass. What ever type you decide on, avoid plastic.

The Barspoon



With a decent barspoon, you can stir, measure, muddle, layer and reduce the bubbles in champagne. Most will have a twisted shaft. While that is not absolutely necessary, the twist helps you roll the shaft between your fingers while stirring. That rolling action spins the spoon while you stir. The blunt end can be used as a muddler and the back of the spoon which is inline with the shaft helps you layer. The spoon itself will measure approximately 1/8 oz – a little over if you pour a meniscus.

Measuring Device



Notice I didn't say jigger. The standard 2 ended jiggers come as 1/2 oz / 3/4 oz and 1 oz / 2 oz. With one of each you can pretty much measure anything. I don't like jiggers because I always spill some of whatever it is I'm measuring. To get an accurate measure with a jigger, you need to pour the liquid so it makes a meniscus rounding over the top. Plus, I find it harder to estimate half measures (1/4 oz in a 1/2 oz jigger).

I like little measuring cups. Oxo makes one and so does Chefstyle. They measure 2 oz, with easily visible lines at 1/4, 1/2, 1 and 1 1/2 oz and 1, 2, 3 and 4 tablespoons. Upside – they're cheap. Downside – they're plastic and don't look cool. I had a guest tease me saying it looked like it came from Barbie's kitchen!



The Strainer



There are 2 major types of strainers: the Hawthorn and the Julep. The julep strainer fits into the glass or tin and, so, is a little harder to use. Out of the gate, a Hawthorn should suffice. Oxo also makes a round strainer which is small and won't cover the tin of your Boston shaker. Just be sure that, whatever you get, it fits your tin and mixing glass. The cheap ones with the little wings work just fine.

Bottle Opener and Wine Bottle Opener

No need to get fancy. Get an old "church key" and a simple cork puller.

Paring Knife and Cutting Board

A small, non-serrated, sharp knife is really important. You'll slice yourself faster with a dull knife. Also, a serrated blade requires more of a sawing motion, which will make cutting narrow zests difficult.

Handheld Juicer



Citrus juice is used in countless cocktails, so you will need a juicer. The classic clam shell juicer comes in 3 sizes: small for limes, larger for lemons and largest for oranges. They are also typically colored green, yellow and orange. For starters, go for the yellow. It will handle limes and lemons which are by far the most common. Oranges and grapefruit you can squeeze by hand. I also suggest the enamel covered variety.

Muddler



Every bar will eventually need a muddler. Initially, you can use your new spoon. [Jeffrey Morgenthaler](#) suggests making one from a rolling pin. Looks interesting.

Fine Mesh Strainer



You will occasionally want to strain your fruit juice or, more commonly, want to strain out the ice shards from a drink you just shook. You can buy a fine mesh strainer made for bars or you can get a cheap one made for the kitchen. One will look cool while the other is less expensive.

So there you have my thoughts. You can pick these up cheap at Target, Amazon, big grocery stores etc.