

Jiggers

The theory: by making bartenders pour into a jigger, you are ensuring an exact pre-measured amount of liquor is being put into each drink.

Furthermore, the guest knows they are not being cheated. And finally, if a bartender does decide to overpour, and fill the jigger more than once, it is really easy to spot because anybody can see them tip it over twice.

Jiggers are so inexpensive, there is no capital investment to implement the system.

The pluses: For ultra high-end spirits like XO Cognacs, \$50 shots of tequila and scotch... which really shouldn't (or can't) hold a pour spout... it's a semi-accurate way to pour AROUND an ounce and a half. And at about a buck and half a piece, an inexpensive way to do it.

The problems:

1. Accuracy. Jiggers are not precise, at all. Have you ever seen the trick where you ask someone how many quarters they can slip into a full beer before it spills? No? Try it. You can pop in a good 20-30 quarters into a "full" glass of beer. The point? The surface of all liquid has a "meniscus" meaning because of things like density and gravity, the surface of liquid is curved, not perfectly level. So if you fill a jigger 20 times, and then measure the liquid using a digital scale, you will get 20 different pours. You can "fill" a jigger and short pour or over pour as much as 1/2 an ounce.

2. Overpouring. It is so easy to do using Jiggers, without tipping or filling the jigger twice. All you have to do is continue to pour so it overflows, before you dump it over. Every bartender who uses jiggers is chuckling right now, because they do it, every single night. Unless someone is standing right on top of the bartender, you can't tell. Jiggers do not prevent over-pouring. Never will.

3. Speed of Service and Sales. You are doubling, tripling,

sometimes quadrupling the production time of every bartender, for every drink they pour. Instead of having two hands to make every drink, one hand now must pick up, hold, tip, and replace the jigger. And no consolidated multi-bottle pours. Unless you are an mega-moron, you should realize that if it takes your bartenders longer to make drinks, you are selling less drinks, every single night. Not 5 less drinks. Not 25 less drinks. More like 200 less drinks. And in most nightclubs, 2000 drinks a night. Do the math on those numbers. Don't you realize that you cannot possible make up the *thousands* of dollars in lost revenue even if by some miracle, you could save an entire case of well vodka by preventing overpouring (which you cannot with jiggers).

4. Wastage. do you have any concept how incredibly difficult it is to pour liquid that shoots out of a bottle into a tiny, cone-shaped metal cup without splashing it all over the bar? It's a bitch. You're wasting all the liquor that in theory, you thought using jiggers would save you. And if your answer to that is to tell your bartenders to "be more careful" by slowing down, you need to re-read the part where i just called you a moron. Twice.

Chamber and Ball Pourers

The theory: These are the pour-spouts with either a ball-bearing that "drops" when the measured amount has passed through the spout or the kind that fill a chamber with the measured amount of liquid and *then* release it out of the chamber into the glass.

The pluses: For operators who have zero trust of any employees, and refuse to spend any money whatsoever training them, as well as **THREE TIMES** the price on pour spouts, I guess this is the solution. *The only way a bartender can overpour, is to drop the bottle to "Re-load" the spout, and pour again.*

The problems:

1. Pricetag. A dozen of these things costs three times more than the kind of pour spouts smart owners buy, which we'll talk about in a minute. More expensive, right out of the gate. And you'll have to replace them a lot sooner.

2. Limitations. Both styles come in a variety of measurements. But you can only have one of those measurements on each bottle. So which do you pick? If you pick say 1/2 or 3/4 ounce... then you have to "double-pump" every bottle for a standard house pour of 1-1 1/4 ounces. Slow, inefficient.

3. More limitations. They don't work with most liqueurs, as the sticky nature and viscosity of such spirits quickly make the balls and trap doors clog.

4. Guest perception. Nobody likes the idea of a gizmo that mechanically and evenly dispenses their alcohol. Perceived or real, guests like the *idea*, even the *suggestion* that they are getting the "hook up."

5. Maintenance and replacement. I've worked with these artifacts more than once. To maintain them so they actually do what they are supposed to, you have to clean them constantly. And they still break, quickly.

Liquor Guns

Commonly found in large casinos, hotels, and once upon a time, airports these are the 80-proof version of the soda gun. Press a lettered or labeled button and viola... and ounce of vodka. click a few other buttons, press the same button...presto: 1/2 ounce of vodka.

The theory: Faster, easier to use, and portion-controlled with a button, these systems have all the benefits of other pour-control systems, without the slower service. Better still, the liquor room you hook all the hoses up to (much like you do with the post-mixes of soda guns) take 1.75 liter bottles so you can cash in on price breaks of these larger bottles.

The pluses: Great for BOH service bars with limited space or other outlets where you mainly need to dispense high volumes of basic, cheap highballs. Casinos love the systems because it allows for more secure inventory (one liquor room that is locked most of the day can supply booze to dozens of bars at once) while also providing the cheapest possible cost for thousands of drinks they are giving away to gamblers for free, anyway. Once you get fast with a good liquor gun, they are actually very fast and efficient.

The problems:

1. Limitations. You can only hook up so many brands to one gun. With the exploding popularity of premium pours of high-end Vodkas, Flavored-Rums, and Ultra-Premium Tequilas... you just can't fit everything you need to on a liquor gun. They also don't work with most liqueurs.

2. Maintenance. Those hoses require frequent, expensive cleaning. So does the entire system. If you don't flush, clean, and bleed your lines every few weeks, your booze will smell like rotten eggs. I've seen, er...smelt it, first hand, er... nose. And guess what you are flushing and bleeding down the drain? Product. Talk about spillage. Kiss those imaginary profits the salesman promised you goodbye. They just washed down the sink.

3. Guest perception. Nobody likes the idea of a gizmo that mechanically and evenly dispenses their alcohol. Perceived or real, guests like the *idea*, even the *suggestion* that they are getting the "hook

up.” And nobody is going to believe you have Skyy 90 vodka hooked up to your liquor gun, so you just cannot fight this perception nightmare.

4. Employee Morale. Push button bartending. There is just something so mechanical, sterile, and unnatural about it. The more you take the craftsmanship out of our craft, the less passionate bartenders are about it. That boredom is contagious and will seep over into the rest of their performance. You can't be a passionate mixologist or flair bartender, who has to make 75% of his or her drinks using a liquor gun.

Collar/POS Systems

Mostly found in airports, they have replaced the old-school liquor guns. POS Terminals (cash registers) are hooked to what looks a lot like a soda gun, only fitted with a collar that when slipped onto any bottle does a lot of things at once. It unlocks the pour spout so the bottle will actually pour, electronically dispenses an exact amount of liquid, registers that pour for inventory purposes *and* ringing purposes.

The theory: The uncheatable system. The bottles simply will not pour unless they are rang up on the POS, ingredient by ingredient, and the collar is fit over each bottle. There is no way for a bartender to give away any liquor because in essence, the “pour spout” is controlled by the cash register. Zero theft, zero overpouring, consistency, and immediate, computerized inventory and pour cost calculations.

The pluses: Great for properties like airports with remote outlets not easily monitored by a skeleton staff of managers. Makes giving away drinks or overpouring incredibly difficult.

The problems:

1. Price tag. \$30,000. \$50,000. \$120,000. The larger number of bars you need to outfit with this expensive technology, the bigger the investment. And while the salesmen will do all kinds of “new math” to

“prove” how this investment will pay for itself in months, don’t bet on it. Do you realize how much product you have to prevent from being given away to add up to even \$30,000 in saved revenue? No? Well do the math. That’s more than 5 cases...cases...of vodka, your bartenders would have to be overpouring or giving away...every single week...for an entire year, to pay for itself. 64 bottles to be exact. And that only would pay for the smallest, cheapest systems.

2. Speed of sales and service. Forget about it. Try making Long Islands, Mai Tais, and Cadillac Margaritas with these abominations. A friend of mine had to deal with the installation of a system like this a few years back. Just listening to him explain the process of making a Long Island made me tired. Ring up 1/2 ounce of vodka. Put the collar on the vodka bottle. Pour. Ring up 1/2 of rum. Put the collar on the rum bottle. Pour. Ring up 1/2 ounce of the getting the picture? What was once their most popular and profitable night, a weekly promotion on Long Island Teas, was all but killed by this five-figure monstrosity.

3. Guest perception. Nobody likes the idea of a gizmo that mechanically and evenly dispenses their alcohol. Perceived or real, guests like the *idea*, even the *suggestion* that they are getting the “hook up.” Are you seeing a recurring theme here?

4. Morale. What self-respecting bartender of any skill, talent, passion, or experience would want to be reduced to a button-pushing zombie? My friend quit a job he had been at for six years within a month of being shackled to this new system.

5. The reality. Within one year of spending literally more than one million dollars retro-fitting an entire chain of bars with this system that promised dramatic cuts in costs and even boasted improved revenue, they were all removed. Gee, I wonder why.....

And worst of all....

Mr. Bartender Machines

I honestly don't know who has ever bought one of these ridiculous contraptions, but they do exist. Best described as a combination of the Collar/POS system with a drinking fountain, these are actually large metal contraptions that have a panel of buttons that you can program drink recipes onto, press, and a fountain dispenses all the various liquors and liqueurs, in exacting proportions, in one quick stream.

The theory: I guess the idea is replace bartenders with monkeys. Or possibly create self-serve cocktail bars. Only you'd have to have access to all the mixes, shaker tins, ice, garnishes, spices, strainers, and everything else besides the booze, in order to actually make a decent drink. I truly don't get the sales pitch on this one. At least with the collar systems and the liquor guns, the bartender is still required to know recipes and actually makes the drinks. Short of having a post-mix system hooked up to this, I can't see how it is not aimed at being a replacement for a living, breathing bartender. "Push one button and there's your long-island iced tea." That's what the sales rep was slinging at a tradeshow when I first saw this Frankenstein of a contraption. I laughed and said "where's the ice? Where's the sour mix? Where's the cola? How about the lemon? Where's the straw? Where's the smile?" He wasn't amused. Neither was I.

The pluses: You can finally put that pet monkey of yours to work, being your bar apprentice who presses the button and lets the liquor dump into the cup. But you still have to make and sell all the drinks. And handle the cash. And do everything else this stupid machine can't do. But yes, you could poach your staff from the local McDonald's if you get in a pinch for good bartenders. They know how to press buttons with pictures of food on them.

The problems:

1. Price tag. Don't ask. It's laughable how much they want for this idiot box.

2. Profitability. I'm sorry, but if your bartenders are so dumb, and so dishonest that you actually think "this is the answer!" you're not going to stay in business long enough for me to explain it to you.

3. Guest perception. This might work for bad coffee, or cans of soda in the break room, but not cocktails.

4. Principal. Bartending is one of the first and last skilled trades known to man. There is not a machine that with a touch of a button, can make Mojitos the way that one of your regulars likes them, or that is programmed to remember that "the Saturday Night Couple" likes their Screwdrivers made with a splash of Cointreau and a touch less vodka. And I've never seen a machine that can shadow pass. And I hope I never do.

5. The reality. If you buy one these things, e-mail me so I can come to your bar and fall down on the ground laughing at you. No really, please. I'd love to see your \$75,000 "Spiked Slurpee" Machine in action.

There is one other system I haven't touched on. It has been around for roughly 20 years. Maybe more. It costs about \$1500 to put into place including all "equipment" and training. Takes about an hour to teach to your entire staff.

Technical Freepouring

The theory: Using low-cost, highly-durable and precise pour spouts and a plastic rack of test tubes, you train your bartenders to use a foolproof counting system that is faster, more accurate, and less expensive to

implement and maintain than every other system invented. This is not “eyeballing” pours like a lot of bartenders do, this is a true system and it is technical.

The pluses:

1. Price tag. Pour spouts are \$1 a piece, the test/training tool is under \$200.

2. Speed or service and sales. Nothing is faster than the human hand and eye working together. A machine may be able to access and dump preset liquids into a plastic cup faster, but when we’re talking about making multiple drink orders, of various cocktails for different people as fast as possible, there is no machine on earth than beat a trained bartender. None. And I’ll fly anywhere in the world to prove it. Any takers?

3. Theft Prevention. The best part of this system for owners is that you too can learn it in an hour. And with practice for about 30 minutes a day, for a couple weeks, you and your managers will have the awesome power to be able to sit in the back of your club, or even at home and watch a camera monitor, and know when one of your bartenders so much as over-pours .25 of an ounce.

4. Value Perception. Part of training this system is teaching the technical cuts and pours, which includes how to make guests believe they are getting “the hook up” when in fact, they are getting exactly what they paid for, and not a drop more. Even without these techniques, the simple fact is everybody wants their bartender to be the one in control of how much liquor they get. Guests prefer freepouring as much as bartenders.

5. Morale. Half the reason people gravitate to bartending is to get away from the strict environments of office and factory jobs. They want freedom. Freepouring delivers that. But it gets much, much better than that. Taking the time to train them a skilled craft like technical freepouring will make their confidence and their morale soar. You have not seen a

bartender as proud as one who can “black line” a “money pour” when it counts.

6. Flair. If you are still living in the dark ages, and don't know how hot flair bartending has become as both a trend and a business model, a couple sentences in an article ain't gonna do it. But maybe this will get you thinking: the highest-grossing bar, per square foot, in the #1 liquor-selling city in the world...is a flair-bar. It's called Carnival Court. And for all the bartenders reading this, the most consistently obnoxiously high tips, made in this same city, on a nightly basis, are made by the bartenders ... at this same flair bar. Carnival Court. Put it this way: their barbacks make more than most bartenders at the best bars and clubs in the rest of the country. Fact. We're talking about bartenders, 22 and 23 year old bottle-flipping bartenders, who own homes (plural) and cars (plural). Cars like Porches and Mercedes that they bought in cash. From bartending. Flair bartending. Free-pouring.

The problems:

1. Perception. Unfortunately, so many people in this business are closed-minded and clueless. the minute they hear “Free-pouring” they think of uncontrollable, untrackable, unending loss of product and profit. The erroneous perception of freepouring is that is cannot be accurate or monitored. ***Both could not be further from the truth.***

2. Maintenance. Sadder still, is that we now live in a society where people have become so lazy, they don't want to do their jobs, unless they absolutely have to. So owners and managers would rather sink tens of thousands into contraptions, gizmos, and computers that claim to do their job, rather than take a couple hours to learn a new skill, and a couple more hours to teach it to their staff. Yes, this system requires some training, some practice, and it needs to be monitored. So for the brain-dead and the chronically lazy, this is not the ideal system.