

make it and take it party

Host a bunch of budding amateur cocktailians for an evening of DIY mixology, complete with take-home treats to use in their home bars.

Invite Guests

Guests will need room to mix and prep, so tailor the size of the list to your available workspace. Ask each person to bring a bottle of an unflavored spirit to infuse (white rum, Tequila or vodka work nicely), various herbs and spices and several jars or containers with tight lids in which to take home the creations.

Assemble Gadgets and Tools

This is a hands-on affair, so have ready cutting boards, paring knives, kitchen shears, colanders, funnels, and small mesh strainers, as well as bar mops for spills. Display cocktail books and index cards with recipe ideas, but also encourage guests to craft their own inspired concoctions.

Serve Cocktails & Appetizers

Since everyone will be hard at work whipping up ingredients for their back-bar shelves, you'll want to keep food and beverages simple and accessible. Set out pitchers of sangria or a bowl of punch, along with unfussy snacks like guacamole and chips, hummus and crudité's and roasted seasoned nuts.



Mix Up Innovative Infusions

A quart of strawberries steeped for a few weeks in a bottle of blanco Tequila is an easy-to-make, flavor-packed infusion, says Jeff Faile, bar manager for Fiola in Washington, D.C., but any berry-and-spirit combination works nicely, as does a bunch of mint in a bottle of vodka. Cut up the fruit first, and be sure to have guests "smack" the herbs to release their oils.



Snazz Up Syrups

The standard 1:1 ratio is a great place to start, says H. Joseph Ehrmann, proprietor for San Francisco's Elixir. "Once you understand those concepts, you can start to experiment," he says. Boil equal parts water and sugar, agave or honey in saucepans. Have guests pour the base into a sterilized Mason jar, and add basil, mint, lavender, ginger or lemongrass. Steep, removing solids when desired flavor is obtained.



Go Gaga Over Garnishes

Booze-soaked cherries are one of the easiest and most impressive garnishes. Have each guest fill a jar with washed, pitted fresh cherries, then let them top it off with their customized cuvée of brown spirits. For a zippy Bloody Mary or margarita rimmer, set out herbs and spices—like chili powder, red pepper flakes, rosemary and citrus zest—to combine with a scoop of coarse or sea salt.

Assemble Goodies to Go

Show and tell your flavor combinations before boxing up guests' final products. Make sure all liquids are cool, and the lids and seals are tight. Tuck in a muddler, bar spoon or jigger, and note cards with cocktail recipes that use the house-made ingredients. —KELLY MAGYARICS

For delicious DIY cocktail recipes, visit winemag.com/diycocktails