



@HEYBARTENDEREVENTS

The Wedding Playbook

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO RUNNING A FLAWLESS WEDDING BAR 2026

BY HAPS DHAND | HEY BARTENDER / HEY GLOBAL EVENTS



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A Note From Me

After 20+ years of running bars, training bartenders, building hospitality teams, and delivering thousands of events - I've learned one thing very clearly:

Most wedding bars fail before the first drink is poured.

Not because of budget.

Not because of alcohol.

But because the bar is treated as an afterthought, rather than the engine that drives the entire celebration.

A great wedding bar doesn't just serve drinks.

It controls energy.

It guides emotion.

It shapes memory.

This guide exists to show you how to do that properly - whether you're planning your own bar, working with a venue, or booking a professional team.

Haps Dhand





THE 10 WEDDING BAR COMMANDMENTS

A Manifesto for Exceptional Wedding Hospitality

These principles are inspired by years behind bars, thousands of events, and one simple belief:

Drinks should be treated like courses. Service should feel like theatre.



1. THOU SHALT RESPECT THE FLOW OF DRINKS

- Never rush the night.
- Spritz at the beginning.
- Wine paired with food.
- Highballs to lift the energy.
- Cocktails to light the fire.
- Shots when the party's already burning.
- Drinks should move like music - building tension, release, and momentum.

A wedding bar isn't random.....It's a journey.

2. THOU SHALT NEVER START WITH COCKTAILS

Strong, sweet, sour cocktails are end-of-night energy, not arrival vibes.

We should be normalising spritz receptions.

- Light. Refreshing. Elegant.
- They warm guests up, create conversation, and set the tone - without blowing the doors off before the night even begins.



3. THOU SHALT DESIGN BARS FOR SPEED, NOT JUST LOOKS

A beautiful bar that can't perform is useless.

If there are:

- No ice wells
- No sinks
- No speed rails
- No hygiene flow

You don't have a bar - you have a table with bottles.

Bad layouts make bartenders work harder, not smarter.

And slow service kills atmosphere.

4. THOU SHALT TREAT DRINKS LIKE COURSES

- Aperitif before dinner.
- Digestif after.
- Drinks should compliment food, mood, and moment.
- If chefs carefully design menus, why shouldn't bartenders?

This is hospitality - not guesswork.



5. THOU SHALT NOT UNDERESTIMATE ICE, GLASS & SOFT DRINKS

Run out of alcohol? Forgivable.

Run out of ice or glassware? Criminal.

No ice = no speed.

No glass = no class.

And if your soft drinks are coming from 1L bottles... just stop.

6. THOU SHALT CHOOSE BARTENDERS, NOT BOTTLE POURERS

Anyone can pour alcohol.

Few can:

- Read a room
- Control pace
- Build atmosphere
- Manage flow

Your bartenders are your frontline experience team.

- They shape energy.
- They shape memory.
- They shape the night.



7. THOU SHALT RESPECT THE SETUP

A wedding bar is a temporary operation.

Which means:

- Logistics matter
- Planning matters
- Experience matters

Trestle tables.. 24 glasses. Two bags of ice.

That's not a bar - that's a disaster waiting to happen.

8. THOU SHALT NOT CHEAP OUT ON THE BAR

You booked a luxury venue.

You booked premium catering.

You bought the dream dress.

Then suddenly the bar is where the budget panic starts?

Guests remember drinks more than flowers.

Don't starve the one thing that fuels your entire party.



9. THOU SHALT NEVER BRAND THE WEDDING BAR

It's their wedding - not your advert.

Luxury whispers.

It doesn't shout.

10. THOU SHALT CREATE EXPERIENCES, NOT JUST SERVE DRINKS

Anyone can pour.

Only a few can create moments people remember years later.

That's the difference.

That's the craft.

That's the art.



THE WEDDING BAR PHILOSOPHY

Wedding bars should be free-flowing, curated, and carefully timed.

Just like a tasting menu, your drinks should arrive in phases that compliment the rhythm of the day:

- Spritz & light aperitifs on arrival
- Wine paired with food
- Highballs & light cocktails as energy lifts
- Full cocktails during the party
- Digestifs & shots late into the night

This pacing ensures guests enjoy themselves - without burning out early.



The Biggest Wedding Bar Mistakes

✗ BAD BAR LAYOUT

Decor-led bars, DJ bar packages, and trestle-table setups almost always lack:

- Hygiene protocols
- Ice wells
- Proper drainage
- Logical bottle flow

**They look good in photos.
They perform terribly in reality.**

✗ POOR DRINK DESIGN

- Over-sweet Cocktails
- Too many syrups
- Unbalanced flavours

Especially common at larger cultural weddings where quantity is prioritised over quality

✗ UNDERESTIMATING LOGISTICS

Most DIY bars fail on:

- Ice
- Glassware
- Soft drinks
- Storage

The result?

Slow service, warm drinks, stressed staff, and frustrated guests.



A Real Wedding Bar Rescue Story

We were once booked to simply staff a bar for a premium spirit brand at a high-profile celebrity wedding. We were told the caterer would supply everything — bar, glassware, and ice.

I didn't trust it.

So I instructed our team to load the van with a full cocktail bar, over 200 glasses, two industrial ice igloos, and all our operational essentials.

When they arrived, they sent me a photo:

A 6ft trestle table. 24 martini glasses. Two 2kg bags of ice.

That was it.

The client was **Joshua Kane**. The brand was **Crystal Head Vodka**.

We immediately built our bar, deployed our full setup, and delivered an exceptional service.

The client later tracked me down to personally thank me for saving his wedding day.

That wedding was featured across publications, and the testimonial still sits proudly across our platforms.

Experience matters.



Why DIY Wedding Bars Usually Fall Short

DIY bars often look cheaper on paper. In reality, they usually cost more.

Couples underestimate:

- Ice requirements
- Glassware volumes
- Soft drink consumption
- Waste
- Breakages
- Transport
- Storage

It's strange how someone can book the Savoy, spend heavily on catering, then suddenly panic when it comes to the bar - even though most guests spend more time drinking and dancing than eating mains.



The DIY Wedding Bar Service Guide

A Professional Framework for Couples Who Want to Run Their Own Bar

This section exists for one reason: **clarity.**

If you decide to run your own wedding bar, these principles, ratios, and calculations will help you avoid the most common (and costly) mistakes.



Staffing Ratios Bartenders & Bar Backs

Guest Count	Beer & Wine	Cocktail Service	Bar Support
Upto 50	1-2	2	1
100	2-3	3	1-2
150	3-4	4-5	2
200	4-5	6	3

Rule: Once cocktails are involved, staffing must increase.



Practical Wedding Bar Calculations

Drinks Per Guest (Average 6-Hour Event)

First hour: **2–3 drinks per guest**

Each following hour: **1–2 drinks per guest**

Average: **7–9 drinks per guest**

How Many Drinks From a 70cl Bottle

Serve Size	Drinks per Bottle
25ml (single)	28
50ml (Large / Cocktail)	14

Cocktails assume a minimum of 50ml total alcohol per drink.



Ice Planning

- Beer & wine weddings: ~1kg ice per guest
- Cocktail-heavy weddings: ~1.5kg ice per guest

100-guest cocktail wedding = approx. 150kg of ice

Ice is not just for chilling - it controls dilution, temperature, texture, and presentation.

Choosing the right ice improves drink quality, speed of service, and perceived value.

Cubed Ice (Standard Bar Ice)

Highballs (G&T, Rum & Coke)
Shaken cocktails
General service
Large volume events

Crushed Ice

Mojitos
Brambles
Tiki drinks
Juleps

Dry Ice (Solid CO₂)

Visual theatre
Halloween or themed events
Showpiece cocktails
Brand activations
NEVER serve dry ice in drink for consumption

Clear Block / Large Format Ice

Old Fashioned
Neat pours
Premium cocktails
VIP / luxury events



Glassware Planning

2 – 3 glasses per guest per hour

Plan for multiple glass types (wine, highball, cocktail)

Champagne Glass

Champagne, prosecco, champagne cocktails, welcome drinks

Wine Glass

Red, white, rosé, spritz serves

Highball Glass

G&Ts, rum & coke, mojitos, palomas, soft drinks

Rocks Glass (Old Fashioned)

Old Fashioneds, negronis, whiskey, short cocktails

Stemless Wine Glass

Casual events, outdoor venues, wine & spritz

Shot Glass

Shots, bombs, tasters, liqueurs

Tiki Mug / Glass

Tiki cocktails, themed events, signature serves



Wedding Bar Checklists

These checklists are designed to help couples, planners, and suppliers pressure-test their bar setup before the event day.

Alcohol & Stock Checklist

- Spirits (70cl bottles only)
- Wine (red, white, sparkling)
- Beer & low-alcohol options
- Signature cocktail ingredients
- Soft drinks & mixers (individual bottles/cans)
- Garnishes (fresh & prepped)
- Bitters & modifiers
- Backup stock (10–15% contingency)

Equipment & Setup Checklist

- Operational bar with ice wells
- Speed rails
- Hand wash sinks
- Bar mats & spill trays
- Ice storage (insulated)
- Fridges / cold storage
- Garnish boards & tools
- Waste & recycling bins
- Extension leads / power access (if required)



Wedding Bar Checklists

Staffing Checklist

- Trained bartenders
- Dedicated bar backs
- Bar supervisor / lead bartender
- Uniforms & dress code agreed
- Staff briefing completed
- Break schedule planned

Ice & Glassware Checklist

- Ice delivery timed correctly
- Backup ice on site
- Wine glasses
- Champagne flutes / coupes
- Highball glasses
- Cocktail / Martini glasses
- Spare glassware for breakages

Menu & Service Flow Checklist

- Drinks mapped to event timeline
- Arrival drinks confirmed
- Dinner wine quantities agreed
- Party-time cocktail list finalised
- Late-night drinks / digestifs planned
- Mocktail & non-alcoholic options included



Wedding Bar Checklists

Bar Layout & Guest Flow Checklist

- Number of bars matched to guest count
- Clear queue direction
- Separate stations for wine / cocktails if needed
- Glass return points identified
- Easy access for bar backs

Licensing & Compliance Checklist

- Venue licence confirmed
- Temporary Event Notice (if required)
- Public liability insurance
- Age-verification policy
- Responsible service guidelines

On-The-Day Troubleshooting Checklist

- Who makes decisions if stock runs low?
- Who authorises substitutions?
- Who liaises with venue / planner?
- Emergency contact list shared
- Clear chain of command agreed



Wedding Bar Checklists

Is DIY Right For You?

- Comfortable managing staffing
- Comfortable managing stock & wastage
- Comfortable managing ice & glassware
- Comfortable managing licensing & compliance
- Comfortable troubleshooting on the day

If you tick less than three boxes, professional bar services will likely save you time, stress, and money.

Questions to Ask Your Bar Supplier

Use this checklist before booking any bar company:

- Who supplies the bar, glassware, and ice?
- How many bartenders and bar backs will be on-site?
- Are staff fully trained and insured?
- How is stock calculated and managed?
- What happens if something runs out?
- Who is responsible for licensing and compliance?
- How is service speed managed at peak times?
- Can menus and service be tailored to our event flow?



What a World-Class Wedding Bar Looks Like

If budget was unlimited:

- Multiple themed bars
- A champagne & spritz bar for arrivals
- A whisky snug
- A margarita or tequila bar
- A tiki cocktail bar
- Shot service roaming the dancefloor

Each station creating a different mood, flavour, and experience.



The Hey Bartender Promise

When you book our team, you're not hiring bartenders.
You're hiring:

- Bar designers
- Hospitality directors
- Experience creators
- Logistics managers

So you can relax and enjoy your day - while we handle everything behind the scenes.

Final Thoughts

- Meet your team.
- Trust your team.
- Try their drinks.
- Experience their service.
- Anyone can pour a drink.



Only a few can give you moments you'll remember forever.

