

# For Babes™

THE **SMART**  
WOMAN'S  
GUIDE TO  
DRINKING  
SPIRITS  
**RIGHT**

*Kayleigh Kulp*



## **BOOZE FOR BABES**

### **The Smart Woman's Guide to Drinking Spirits Right**

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By Kayleigh Kulp

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# Foreword

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I came to New York City to be a Broadway star and I stayed for cocktails.

Good booze, in its complex and romantic way, does that to you. To fully “get it,” though, you have to be adventurous and curious. Once exposed to its vast world, you’re staying in it.

Let me explain: When I began working as a waitress in a Gramercy Park cocktail bar in 2003, the hot drinks of the day ended with ’tini— key lime pie martinis, chocolate martinis, even a Flirtini (raspberry vodka, Cointreau, and pineapple, cranberry, and lime juices).

If not overly sweet and oversized cocktails like those, I was serving—and drinking—candy-colored tipples made with store-bought mixes and cutesy names aimed at attracting women (think Sex on the Beach, Kamikazes, Cosmopolitans, and Fuzzy Navels). But after practice sessions, my mentor, Amber Tinsley, and I began going for nightcaps after closing across town to a beautiful new place on 19th Street called the Flatiron Lounge. It was like being transported to the gilded age of cocktails. You could imagine Ingrid Bergman drinking there at the long wooden bar under the Art Deco arch that was both inviting and mysterious. The Flatiron Lounge was run by three women: Julie Reiner, Susan Fedroff, and Michelle Connolly—a rarity, even though ladies had a long and storied history in America as tavern owners and formidable cocktail party hostesses.

Bye bye ’tinis; hello romantically named and completely fresh concoctions like the Geisha and Persephone. A martini here was a beautiful stirred (not shaken) blend of gin (holy cow! No vodka?), and vermouth (why did theirs not taste like rancid wine?! This was the high-end lounge lifestyle as we knew it, and, as a 20-something bartender in training, I wanted to be a part of it. There was something glamorous about the atmosphere, about the curvaceous shapes of the glasses.

Call it my epiphany. I stalked the bar for over a year, and in 2004 landed a job there among barkeeps Katie Stipe and Phil Ward. Julie Reiner, who is one of our modern day female bartending pioneers, rewarded hard work sans gender preferences. My experiences there drove my transition from traveling musical theater minstrel to a serious cocktail bartender with a passion for creating liquid art.

At the same time, I saw my own preference evolve from sugary drinks to balanced cocktails with fresh ingredients as my palate grew with each flight of new cocktails I got to taste nightly. Once you go fresh you never go back. There was nothing more exciting than sharing my knowledge and preferences with other young ladies who wanted to try something new but were intimidated to reach beyond the billboards and marketing that had shackled them.

In 2009, I began to parlay my experiences into a platform— a movement of sorts—for smart, spirited and sassy women. I launched the New York City chapter of Ladies United for the Preservation of Endangered Cocktails, an organization that honors the cocktails, hospitality, and spirits traditions of our forebears and encourages women to embrace them. Our goal is to constantly educate ourselves and to give back to charities. Then in 2010, I co-founded Speed Rack, an all ladies bartending competition, with another awesome bartender, Ivy Mix. All of the proceeds are donated to breast cancer research. We’ve met some incredible women who are behind some of the best cocktail bars, decked out in bandannas, a fearless attitude, and with endless support for the cause.

~~Women have come a long way in solidifying our place in the workforce, honing our tastes in gourmet food and wine, and overall kicking butt in life. But there is still work to be done when it comes to being completely comfortable drinking a scotch neat or a bourbon and branch the way men have for decades. But the tides are changing. I have recently seen several “old man” whiskey brands making an active effort to include women in the brown and aged spirits conversation, and more and more young women are choosing brown spirits over the flavored vodkas that were once their go-tos.~~

It goes without saying that it is time for Booze for Babes, a smartly written starter guide for women who want to be spirits-savvy, but don't know where to begin. Don't worry, you'll get there. Just like with food, there are so many opportunities to access quality products, with micro-distilleries popping up like breweries and more bartenders who won't settle for less than fresh citrus. So arm yourself with the knowledge in the subsequent pages and if you do want a “pink” drink, make it a Pink Lady.

Here's to you, drinking better. Cheers!

### **Lynnette Marrero**

Owner of DrinksAt6 Cocktail Consulting, President of Ladies United for the Preservation of Endangered Cocktails New York City, and Co-Founder of Speed Rack

### **PINK LADY**

1 1/2 ounces gin  
1/2 ounce lemon  
1/4 ounce simple syrup  
1/2 ounce grenadine  
1/2 ounce applejack whiskey  
1 egg white

Add all ingredients to a shaker. Shake and strain into a coupe glass and garnish with a cherry.



# Introduction

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If there's one overarching lesson you will take away from *Booze for Babes*, it's to never let anything intimidate you. If you bought this book, you are a babe and a force to be reckoned with. That's not to mention you want to learn how to appreciate booze. Not just any kind, but the kind that reflects refinement, the kind that takes a lot of time, care, and expertise to produce.

Even the most well educated and independent gal can make mistakes at the bar, and I don't mean taking home the wrong kind of man or getting tipsy in front of the boss. I'm talking about bigger disgraces, like giving bartenders the vaguest of drink criteria or letting a guy buy you something mixed with soda or pre-made sour mix. Both are surefire ways to lower a girl's badass factor and generally perpetuate the stereotype that women don't know Jack Daniels about booze.

I know because that was me! I used to be the sort of girl who generally knew what I wanted in life but managed to instantly lose my way at a bar. When people came over, I'd grab a no-fuss bottle of wine or six-pack of beer. I was guilty of blindly asking bartenders for drinks ("I don't know. Give me something fruity and not too strong, please!"). Rather than savoring a cocktail, I considered it an accessory. I often chose drinks that overpowered the main spirit, rather than enhanced its flavor. I also didn't know enough to choose a booze that didn't need the coverup help.

Crucial mistake! After all, I was a woman who appreciated the finer things in life, enjoyed good food, wine, traveling, learning. It wasn't until a trip to the heart of whiskey and bourbon country that I learned to appreciate what the wide world of liquor and specifically, brown spirits, could offer the refined palate. I went to America's heartland a wimpy girl and came back a whiskey girl, garnering newfound respect at the bar. Soon enough, I was teaching my husband and his friends about booze. I ordered bourbon Manhattans and neat scotches at the bar, much to the staff's surprise. Despite the sometimes jolted looks I'd receive when asking exactly which Japanese whiskies were available and oh – can please give me a side of room temperature water? – most everyone found a young woman knowing her brown booze was incredibly sexy, and more importantly, I felt sexy too. Though I enjoyed cooking and entertaining at home, I finally felt I had graduated to a new level of culinary refinement.

Since then, I have become dedicated to empowering babes everywhere to embrace, learn about, and consume various fine spirits—from whiskey to brandy to tequila—the way they should be (responsibly, of course). Once I began researching the on-again, off-again relationship between women and booze throughout history—history largely dominated by men—it was easy to see why we have been in the dark about liquor all these years. The liquor companies are also partly to blame for our ignorance about liquor. If you look at contemporary ad campaigns, you'd think only men drink booze that isn't clear and that women won't touch a drink if it's not candy-colored. You'd think that women only want to drink what they are told to drink, and not what their husbands or boyfriends like. Spirits companies assume you won't like the good stuff, introducing sweeter, crossover blends and bottled cocktails meant to entice females (think skinny this, skinny that, or black cherry flavored bourbon). But these aren't necessary and we don't need stepping stones. Once babes are exposed to the beauty of sipping a well made spirit by itself or simply accented with quality ingredients, you won't wanna drink anything but the good stuff, and I'll teach you how to find it.

This book sheds some light in a succinct overview, with special shout outs to particular women who have staked their claim in the world of booze. There is one disclaimer: I am not a professional bartender, and I do not claim to have all the answers when it comes to all things booze. However, I know what it is like to feel lost when it comes to liquor. And when I wanted to learn more, there were no resources that spoke to me. It seemed there were only cocktail recipe books that dumbed it all down, niche books honing in on one element of cocktails, or those written for the experts. I just needed a quick reference guide for drinking better. You do too!

I wrote this book in a way that I would have found amply useful when starting my cocktail and spirit self-education—by breaking down tidbits about entertaining, bar etiquette, health, and basic types of booze in ways that will actually come in handy on an average Friday night. As a bonus, these tidbits might even make for titillating cocktail conversation. I also include information that helps us become better, more responsible, and more educated drinkers. Did you know, for example, that women actually get drunker faster than men because we produce less of an enzyme that breaks down alcohol? Or that after menopause we begin to break down alcohol at a similar pace as men? Did you know that coffee and bread are the absolute last things you should eat while drinking? Disseminating these insightful truths, while also highlighting amazing women who are working in the liquor industry as distillers, professional tasters, bartenders, and enthusiasts, are two more good reasons why I wrote this starter guide for women everywhere who want to be savvy about spirits and be able to confidently assert themselves in any boozy situation.

Throughout this book, I will also make a few recommendations and offer tips based on these situations and moods. Whether you are looking for a fun and approachable go-to, an easy drink to sip over conversation with girlfriends, a practical and crowd-pleasing way to serve a spirit to guests, assertive power happy hour suggestions, or an adventurous drink outside of your comfort zone, there is a gateway drink for you, as well as tons of useful information for drinking better and having a blast while doing so.

I hope *Booze for Babes* will help you understand and strengthen your relationship with the hard stuff and will encourage you to pursue the finer things we women have formerly held outside of our comfort zone. It's amazing what a little historical context, engaging education, and, oh yeah, plenty of tasting can do! If you're still thirsty in between reading chapters, keep up to date with new recipes, interviews, how-tos and other interesting tidbits by [signing up for my email list on the home page of BoozeForBabes.com](#).

# Chapter 1: Why Every Lady Should Know Her Liquor

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Before we get started, it's important to determine what, for all intents and purposes here, defines a babe. Technically, the term is a 14th-century Welsh derivative of the word *baban*, which referred to the sound babies make. In the last century or so, babe has been used simply to describe attractive women.

And if you consult the articulate, insightful users of [UrbanDictionary.com](http://UrbanDictionary.com), the word ranges in definition from “a famous pig” or a nickname given by someone who hasn't bothered to learn a person's name, to a woman who is “pleasantly proportioned,” or that the word is simply an “incredibly patronizing, supposedly ‘endearing’ term.”

Obviously the word babe is loaded with stereotypes that generally don't reflect a woman's intellectual and independent qualities. A babe is actually a balanced woman who maintains a sense of her own identity. She's authentic, bold and not fearful of others' disapproval. She's independent but feminine. She's straightforward and classy. She's refined and enjoys the finer things in life. She's hot—not just on the outside, but on the inside, too. Babes are women who are admired by other women and men alike.

It's time we channel our inner babes via the art of drink, too. After all, times have changed since drinking liquor was neither ladylike nor appropriate for us. Women now make up half of the workforce and consequently, the happy hour crowd. We have more disposable income than ever to spend on those Sazeracs. Combine that with the comeback of classic cocktail culture, which emulates a time when stiff, fresh, no-frills drinks like Manhattans and gin gimlets reigned, and you'd think women would know their booze. But we still don't drink on an equal playing field as men.

## The Sazerac

**This boozy New Orleans classic cocktail is similar to an old-fashioned, but the addition of absinthe gives it an extra kick. Some make the drink with a sugar cube, but I sub in simple syrup for mixability.**

**3 ounces rye whiskey**  
**1/2 ounce simple syrup**  
**Few drops of absinthe**  
**Dash of Peychauds bitters**  
**Lemon peel**

**Roll a few drops of absinthe around in a rocks glass. In a separate glass, combine the rye whiskey, simple syrup and bitters with ice and stir well. Strain into the glass with the absinthe in it. Twist the lemon peel over the glass to release its essential oils, and then drop it in the glass and enjoy!**

I'll never forget the night I spent talking with a stranger in a Nashville honkytonk. It was the night before I would begin a tour of whiskey distilleries, in an effort to learn about bourbon and Tennessee whiskey. The nice, middle-aged man was fascinated by my career as a travel and booze writer, my

fancy college education in New York City, and my enjoyment of cocktails. Attempting to discern my tastes, he mentioned that his favorite whiskey was Johnnie Walker. “Oh, I don’t think I’m going to visit Johnnie Walker on this trip,” I replied innocently. He chuckled. “I guess not,” he replied. “It’s in Scotland.”

Ouch. Turns out Johnnie Walker is a scotch whiskey and this guy had taken me to school about it. I’m not afraid to admit that at that point, I didn’t even know because I hadn’t bothered to learn. Despite my enjoyment of good food and drink, I couldn’t tell my backside from a bourbon. I’d like to say this man was a tad shocked, since I portrayed myself as an educated and refined young woman, but I played right into a common assumption that ladies know squat about libations. Well, I’ve since bone up, and I’m here to kick down some knowledge. I’m not saying you need to know about every single brand of whiskey and exactly where it comes from, but you should know the difference between scotch and bourbon, and that’s just the beginning.

Why? Aside from the fact that a woman who can knowingly appreciate everything from a single malt scotch to a simple, well-made sidecar is damn sexy, you should be able to confidently make, ask for, and receive good drinks. Not only will this infinitely increase your enjoyment of imbibing, but it will also help us blow the lid off of the women-don’t-know-Jack-about-liquor stereotype. Still not convinced? Here are a few more reasons women should brush up on their booze.

**1. Learning about booze is fun.** On the aforementioned trip to American whiskey country, which inspired this book and jumpstarted my libation learning quest, I distinctly remember sitting in front of Jack Daniels’ master distiller Jeff Arnett as he coached our tour group through a whiskey tasting. I held the whiskey to my nose to get a true sense of the deep vanilla and oak aromas. I winced as the strong flavor tingled my tongue for several seconds, which, I learned, is not unusual for 80 proof liquor. I wasn’t accustomed to drinking whiskey, especially straight. But what the hell? I became determined to properly savor it. After all, this stuff had been aged and tended to with care for four years—longer than most wines on the market—and I was on the stomping grounds of a brand that proudly serves its typical customer “from LDA to DND” (Legal Drinking Age to Damn Near Dead). By the end of the trip, and several boozy tastings later at small and large distilleries, I knew enough to hone my tastes and determine a favorite. Plus, the experience had been a blast! I had tasted so many new spirits with new friends I’d made along the way. It sparked a lifelong, enjoyable pastime of tasting and learning I’d share with family and friends over plenty of laughs, stories and meals.

Plus, having spent several years as a travel writer, I can’t tell you how much the love—and knowledge—of booze unites people of all ages and backgrounds. Anywhere you go in the world, with a little digging you can find a local spirit you’ve never heard of, and will probably never be able to try or buy again; each one will likely have a storied tradition behind it with hometown history woven in.

Pair that with a city’s drinking customs, and you have one surefire way of having a hell of a good time while learning about a new culture. Befriend a local at a bar and you will have the time of your life on any vacation. I try a new booze everywhere I go, and I love to collect bottles of one-of-a-kind liquors, spirits, and mixers to display on my bar at home.

**2. We should drink like we eat.** Think about it: these days we obsess over chefs, farm-to-table ingredients and the presentation of our food. However, many of us give hardly a thought to the quality of spirits we imbibe, what’s in our drinks, the accolades of the bartender who makes them, or how

they look when they reach your table. Why can some foodies distinguish between merlots from Italy, Mexico, Spain, or California, but not between a single malt scotch and a bourbon? Why is eating out of season or un-local fruits and vegetables a culinary catastrophe, but purchasing pre-made sour and Bloody Mary mixes still de rigueur? It's time we change that, especially among women. If you like to know the cuts of your steak, you should also know—or at least be curious about—the mash of your bourbon.

**3. Babes have extraordinary palates.** Being unknowledgeable about booze is a shame, because women generally have fantastic palates for identifying the complex characteristics and nuances of aged spirits. Many of us just don't realize how good our instincts and senses are . . . yet. Whiskey, for example, arguably offers more aroma compounds than any other spirit. It engages the senses and is meant to be savored, much like a delicious meal. If you love to enjoy the finer things in life, good booze is an affordable luxury.

**4. Good booze is good for you (in moderation).** In the world of booze, wine gets all the credit for being the healthy choice, but did you know that one ounce of a spirit has the same cholesterol lowering effect as a serving of vino? A standard liquor serving has about 97 calories, similar to a typical glass of wine. A fall 2010 study in the British Medical Journal indicated that a daily drink for women resulted in lower risk of heart disease and healthy cholesterol levels. That's not to mention that a shot of whiskey has the same antioxidant benefits as the recommended daily intake of vitamin (according to researchers at Australia's Monash University), or that Angostura bitters—herb- and spice-infused alcohol created to treat fevers and digestive disorders—can cure hiccups (so says the New England Journal of Medicine).

And contrary to popular belief, moderate alcohol consumption helps stymie weight gain over time, particularly in females (more on that later). The truth is that the real culprits to your waistline are yucky cocktail juices, mixes and spirits fortified with fake sugars. When you learn to drink a spirit straight with no additives, or mix simple drinks from quality ingredients, your body will thank you and you can enjoy a moderate amount of spirits and cocktails without guilt.

**5. You'll dispel the "girlie drink" myth.** We've all heard the phrase "girlie drink" come out of a man's mouth at least once. If a cocktail is pink, topped with an umbrella, or looks otherwise "traditionally" feminine, many men won't be caught dead with it. And in the past, thanks to marketing and the socialization of gender roles that stretch beyond the bar, women who ordered an añejo tequila neat or an extra dry martini might have seemed gruff. But now, drinking that tequila or martini make a woman appear powerful and determined. You might even get an approving nod or "hell yeah!" from a bartender when you order it. Dark spirits, especially, are becoming more appealing to ladies because the definitions of what is womanly and what's manly are starting to blur. Societal norms are changing and our drink preferences are following suit. Let's force bar-goers to ask, "What is a girlie drink or manly drink, anyway?" Because guess what? Girls drink whiskey and cognac, and men drink daiquiris!

**6. Drinking decent booze shows good taste.** In 1879, G. L., the author of the Science of Taste: A Treatise on its Principles, wrote, "Taste may be concisely defined as the capability of appreciating the beautiful; and the beautiful is, primarily, that which, by attracting the eye, satisfies and elevates the mind." This fine 19th-century gentleman was talking about great taste in the style sense, but his insight applies easily to booze as well. And since you are a babe, you already have good taste, so why

not show it off in your glass? Women who show they can drink a strong spirit, and step outside their comfort zone with classics like rye whiskey, bourbon, or gin show they care about what they ingest while earning respect at the bar and in life. Drinking well exhibits confidence, sexiness, and adventurousness. Make your drink of choice aged and brown and you will practically knock the pants off any man (not that we are doing so for the enjoyment of anyone but ourselves).

Got your attention? Let's get started.

## Chapter 2: The Herstory of Liquor

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I'd venture to assume that most women—including me before writing this book—are not aware of the impact our fellow broads have had on the world of booze throughout history, and how this informs our current relationship with the hard stuff today.

Alcohol, and especially liquor, have spent the better part of civilization's existence in the realm of men. When women were able to wrangle a foothold in the booze business—like the tavern-running ladies of America's colonial era—they faced a double standard. Men allowed us to help produce and serve booze, sure, but a gal couldn't drink it in public without being dubbed a floozy.

Today, women drink freely with men, there are stellar female bartenders elevating the craft, and more women are running distilleries and working as master tasters and blenders, proving they know their stuff and can hang with the boys. But many women remain in the dark about spirits, particularly the brown categories. Women make up just 25 percent of whiskey drinkers even though whiskey is the second bestselling booze, making up 24 percent of industry revenues in 2011 (just behind vodka, which made up 32 percent), according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. So why is it we don't know how to pick a proper scotch, how gin is made, or feel natural ordering a boozy and stirred cocktail, rather than a vodka soda? Let's get some context.

Since it would take an entire book to cover the history of women's involvement in booze around the world, let's narrow it down. Upon colonizing America, our English ancestors brought their drinking experiences, traditions, and societal norms with them, and alcohol trends and movements in both countries continued to echo each other for two hundred years. So here's a crash course in the breakup-and-make-up relationship we've had with booze in the United States and the United Kingdom.

### **We love it . . .**

I'll begin in late medieval England, when women dominated the drink trade. Ballads extolled how valuable an attractive wife could be for business at taverns as she welcomed guests, plied them with liquor, and kept them entertained. It's safe to assume this mentality continued for a couple hundred years, even overseas. That's because the history books show that in colonial America, women could not legally own or acquire property, enter into a contract, or write a will, but they were offered liquor licenses when widowed as an alternative to public assistance. By 1696, women held almost half of the liquor licenses in Boston and managed a third of its 75 taverns.

In Charleston, South Carolina, women outnumbered male barkeeps in all but one year of the 15 preceding the American Revolution. Ladies weren't just making a living off of liquor; several colonial women made big waves in the industry. Deborah Man was the most successful liquor retailer in Boston in the 1710s, and Rebecca Holmes presided over Bunch of Grapes, the renowned Boston tavern that became a Revolutionist hangout for the Sons of Liberty.

But despite their role behind the bar, ladies looking to imbibe faced a double standard. Though women were expected to use their sex appeal to sell drinks, and display motherly and hospitable sensibilities to make guests feel at home at the bar, it was considered unladylike to drink booze or hang out in taverns. Female patrons earned bad reputations and were accused of using the establishments to engage in illicit sex.

## Gin Sins

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Across the pond in England, where gin was incredibly popular, women were facing the same double standard. Society believed that ladies' gin drinking threatened families thanks in part to one particularly high profile case in 1734, when a woman named Judith Dufour strangled her two year-old child and sold his new clothes to buy gin. Society even blamed gin-drinking women—but not men—for the spread of syphilis and adultery. Part of this is attributed to the fact that gin shops, which operated like taverns, happened to be hangouts for prostitutes seeking tipsy male customers.

By the time the Gin Act of 1736 was enacted, which increased licensing fees and taxes on gin while authorizing rewards for snitching on petty, illegal gin hawkers in London, women were several times more likely than men to be charged, convicted, and sent to prison because of a belief that women did not belong in the business even though they were excluded from many other occupations. Though women accounted for less than 20 percent of all known gin retailers in East London and the City of London, they accounted for nearly 70 percent of the individuals charged under the Gin Act of 1736.

In folklore, female gin drinkers were characterized as witches—the ultimate diss. Take Madam Geneva, an unholy creature described as “part whore and part witch,” who is the star of William Hogarth's “Gin Lane” illustration, which was published in 1751 and depicts the evil caused by gin. The star of the photo – a woman, of course – has got a baby falling from her lap off of a staircase, an open blouse and syphilis sores on her legs. The image makes the story's moral clear: gin drinking ag and destroys women, and consequently wreaks havoc on society. This is how gin got the nicknames “Ladies' Delight” and “Mothers' Ruin.”

### Widespread Discrimination in the 19th Century

The double standard didn't end there. Women continued to face libation discrimination into the 19th century, which also saw ladies experiencing a roller coaster-like struggle with their feelings about booze.

Around the world, saloons were old boys' clubs where men could escape home, down drinks, wage bets, make loans, and exchange stories among other men. After all, slouching against the bar with one foot on the rail would have been unthinkable behavior for most “respectable” women. Bars were decorated with artwork depicting cockfights, horse races, and battleships, and the whole culture revolved around the “regular” customer who told dirty jokes at women's expense. As Catherine Gilbert Murdock writes in *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol 1870-1940*: “From the workplace to the blue-collar saloon and blue-chip private club, alcohol promoted male bonhomie. The drink he chose, and where he chose to drink it, defined a man's profession, his ethnicity, his community standing.”

In the early part of the century, American women were getting particularly fed up, having to deal with all the responsibilities of a home and family while their men were getting good and drunk. United States women organized temperance groups to put pressure on their husbands, fathers, and sons to quit drinking. In fact, their hatred of booze really brought them together—the Daughters of Temperance boasted 20,000 members in the first half of the 19th century, making it the largest women's organization of any kind prior to the Civil War. It was this controversy over alcohol that inspired women's political participation in a variety of issues—such as the right to vote.



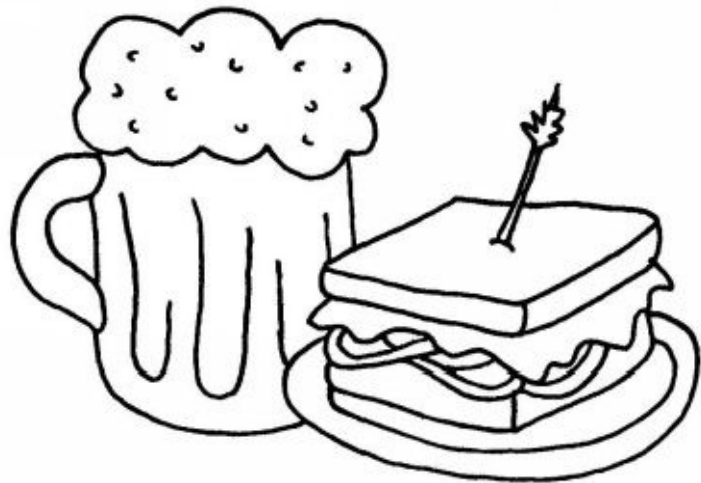
Not all women were on board with this movement, however, whether at home or overseas. Saloon back rooms were frequently used for coed parties or vaudeville shows, and women often came in to purchase carryout growlers of whiskey or beer. Of course they were allowed in through a ladies-only side entrance, which minimized their public appearance at the tavern and kept women from entering the barroom proper. If women drank in public, they were expected to do so moderately.

Instead of facing scrutiny, some women drank alone in the privacy of their homes, while others sought the company of female neighbors. Men had their taverns, and women would sometimes gather on stoops and in courtyards to drink together. Outside of taverns, men and women did not always drink separately, particularly among the working class. In the evenings and on Sundays, men and women might participate in growler fests (drinking parties) on rooftops or in courtyards.

But around the late 19th century, with social politics in mind, drinkers began to move the party from taverns to hotel bars where ladies were welcome, though they remained segregated in different rooms so as not to impose on male bonding. Slowly men and women began to drink together in dance halls, cabarets, and restaurants, sparking a heated public debate. Keeping women from drinking was consistent with society's insistence that good wives fulfill their duties to husbands and children by remaining at their labors rather than squandering time drinking. And people were plenty vocal about it!

## The Free Lunch

**Paid for by brewery subsidies in the late 1880s, taverns began to offer free hot lunches with the purchase of a five-cent drink. Since these lunches were, by far, a better value than what could be bought anywhere else in town, and were actually tasty, many female workers were lured into saloons, though they entered through side doors and ate in their back rooms.**



However, it was completely socially acceptable for men to get hosed on the regular. Most, but not all, men still loved alcohol and wanted the pastime of drinking to remain their own. They loved the saloons and fraternal societies where they imbibed. Women felt their husbands spent too much time drinking and not enough time at home with their families. Many women and children were also suffering abuse at the hands of drunken fathers and husbands. Some ladies tried to woo their husbands away from the saloon by keeping themselves attractive and their homes comfortable, while other wives tried to beat the saloon by drinking with their husbands at home.

**We leave it . . .**

At the same time and into the start of the 20th century, other women were leading a charge for alcohol temperance. Perhaps the most famous and influential female temperance leader, instrumental in eventually enacting Prohibition, was Carry Nation. Nation, a strong and somewhat scary woman—she dressed in black and carried a hatchet—was a member of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, which backed legislation to restrict or ban the sale of alcohol in local communities. The group labeled drunkenness “a national curse,” and by holding nonviolent protests was able to close over 25,000 drinking establishments. So why was Nation such a buzz kill? Blame it on her first husband, Dr. Charles Gloyd, who hid in his local Masonic lodge during irresponsible drinking binges and allowed fellow Masons to shelter him from his wife’s reckoning (Nation would later attack fraternal organizations as vigorously as saloons). In an uncommon move for the time, Nation separated from him while pregnant. Six months after the child’s birth, Gloyd drank himself to death. In Nation’s eyes, alcohol was responsible for ruining her marriage and those of countless others, which is why she worked tirelessly to ban booze. In response to her efforts, Maine became the first state to outlaw the sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages in 1851. By 1855, 13 other territories and states followed suit.

In 1877, she married pastor David Nation and the two settled in Medicine Lodge, Kansas. When she learned local saloon owners were violating the Kansas constitutional amendment prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages, she organized a local chapter of the WCTU. Entering bars, the group sang hymns and prayed for the souls of the patrons. She began attacking illegal saloons and liquor proprietors with stones and hatchets. Eventually, these demonstrations drove the saloons out of business, and though she won that battle, her violent behavior caused her second husband to divorce her.

Carry Nation’s campaign of destruction, which she called “hatchetation,” resulted in her being arrested 30 times. Before her crusade ended, Nation came to Miami in 1908 to support locals in drying up the “wicked little city.” While in Miami, a city that banned the sale of alcohol on Sundays, Nation went on an unannounced inner city tour, noting an abundance of crime and corruption.

### **Ballsy Babes of the Prohibition Era**

Temperance groups like Nation’s finally got their way, and Prohibition, which banned the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol in the United States, was enacted in 1919. In fact, women supported Prohibition more than any other single issue at the time, including suffrage (women got the right to vote a year later in 1920). Furthermore, in supporting Prohibition, women were dismantling society’s strongest link to masculinity at the time. But not all women supported the alcohol ban, feeling liberated by the ability to not only drink freely among men in speakeasies and other illegal watering holes, but to capitalize on illicit booze profits. During Prohibition, a few women played crucial roles on both sides of the booze battle.

### **Spanish Marie**

I love the story of Mary Waite, a six-foot-tall broad with a fiery temper who made a name for herself in the rumrunning biz, one of the most popular and easy ways to get booze into the United States. Rumrunners would load up ships and boats in the Caribbean, where rum was being produced, and sneak rum into Florida ports, where it was then distributed to the state’s speakeasies and beyond. And it didn’t take long for rumrunners to also smuggle Canadian whiskey, English gin, and French champagne to New York and Boston.

Mary Waite's husband, Charlie, was a top dog in the rumrunning business. But when he died in a 1928 Coast Guard shootout, Mary took over the empire, keeping a home base in Havana. With part Mexican heritage and part Swedish, she was nicknamed "Spanish Marie" and became controller of the booze trade from Cuba to South Florida, operating several speedboats and becoming incredibly wealthy as a result of her business savvy. She had several partners in the bedroom and led a generally risqué life.

Her demise came during a routine run. One of her boats, which was loaded with firepower but not with booze, was meant to lure the Coast Guard and attract their attention so that her other booze-laden boats could skate by them unnoticed. The Coast Guard finally caught Waite by intercepting and breaking her radio codes during this scheme, and they arrested her while she unloaded liquor from her boat in Miami on March 12, 1928. The boat had 5,526 bottles of whiskey, rum, gin, wine, champagne and beer.



Because Mary had left her sleeping children at home that day, she retained an attorney and pleaded with law enforcement to let her return to them, promising to show up for a court hearing the next day. They conceded, but Mary never showed up. In fact, she disappeared, along with her money and boats, forever.

### **Gertrude Lythgoe**

Gertrude Lythgoe grew up a smart orphan who, during Prohibition, worked for a London liquor exporter. Her employer saw an opportunity in supplying liquor to the United States through the Bahamas. Needing a savvy businessperson to oversee their affairs, the company tapped the likable Lythgoe for the assignment. In Nassau, she set up the company's wholesale liquor business on Market Street, initiated sales transactions with potential buyers, and oversaw the shipments.

Buyers in the male-dominated business were wary of her, but her smarts overcame their skepticism and she became known as “The Bahama Queen.” Lythgoe sailed on the schooner of notorious rum-runner Bill McCoy from New York to Rum Row, a line of anchored boats just outside United States waters on the Atlantic Coast. Like Spanish Marie, this babe meant business and she was known to threaten members of Nassau rum mobs with pistols.



Lythgoe was arrested in 1925 and charged with smuggling 1,000 cases of whiskey into New Orleans. At the time, The St. Petersburg Times newspaper called her “Queen of the Booze Buccaneers of the Bahamas.” But because Lythgoe had left the shipment with a subordinate who had shadily arranged the deal to make himself the beneficiary, she got off the hook, became a celebrity, and wrote a memoir (*The Bahama Queen: the Autobiography of Gertrude “Cleo” Lythgoe*, published in 1965). She died in Los Angeles in 1974, at the age of 86.

### **Mabel Walker Willebrandt**

On the flipside of the Prohibition debate, one of the most hard-nosed enforcers happened to be a lady—Mabel Walker Willebrandt. In 1921, Willebrandt was appointed assistant attorney general and took up the enforcement of Prohibition. Since women had just been granted the right to vote, the fact that she was given so much power and authority is pretty remarkable. When she came in, liquor laws were openly being defied; law enforcement had been corrupted by smugglers. Willebrandt had \$11 million appropriated by Congress so that the Coast Guard could fight rumrunners like Mary Waite by expanding the fleet with 203 large patrol boats, advanced radio technology, and officers. Her determination eventually led to the curtailing of smuggling, resulting in boats being confiscated and hundreds of arrests and convictions.



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### **Changing Our Minds Again**

Shortly after they helped instate Prohibition in 1919, women soon became a part of the movement to repeal it, thanks to the negative effects the booze ban had on their lives. Instead of drinking in plain sight, legally, their loved ones were drinking under wraps. As a result, some found themselves tangled up in criminal business ventures, bootlegging and chugging alcohol in sultry, mixed-sex speakeasies. Plus, Prohibition had facilitated the entry of drink into the sacred home for illegal cocktail parties, exposing families to the detriments of liquor. So the “gentler sex” rallied once again, this time forming the Women’s Organization of National Prohibition Reform—the most popular repeal organization in the country.

The 1933 repeal of Prohibition made it legal once again for Americans to imbibe, but men were still finding ways to keep women out of their drinking scene. Afraid that barmaids were encroaching on their jobs, bartenders in New York City in 1936 sought to legally ban women from drinking booze and pouring it. But with the start of World War II, more and more women began to take places behind the bar, filling in for the men who went off to fight. These women began forming unions, and by 1953, were gaining serious ground, defeating potential laws that would ban them from running barrooms.

By the beginning of the 1960s, cocktail culture of the Mad Men variety became a part of the high life and women were again expected to serve, and allowed to partake in moderation. Ladies drank and served stiff whiskey, gin, and rum drinks and could down a Manhattan with the best of them. But even with all that progress, in 1971, laws still existed in California that prohibited women from serving whiskey. After that, it had become socially acceptable for women to indulge in drink alongside men, but with unspoken boundaries (such as men drank “manly” drinks like whiskey and women did not touch them).

## **Bartender Babes**

We can't begin to understand the complex relationship between women and bars without also honoring the women behind bars throughout history. These bottle-slingin' babes have brought some serious cred to the male-dominated industry, proving that women have the wherewithal and booze savvy to drink and serve spirits right.

### ***Alice Guest***

After her husband died in 1685, this widow received a tavern license and ran her public house from a cave along the Delaware River in colonial Philadelphia. Her location gave her prime access to mariners and ship workers, and she earned an extraordinary amount of revenue. By the time she passed in 1693, Guest had constructed an entire compound along the river and was revered as a fine businesswoman.



### ***Ada Coleman***

A leading lady of London's regal and famous Savoy Hotel in the late 20th century, Coleman mentored Harry Craddock, an underling at the Savoy who eventually wrote the home bar staple, *The Savoy Cocktail Book*. She was well-known among prestigious authors, politicians, and celebrities at a time when few women earned such high-browed clients' respect in the service sector. Coley—as Coleman was nicknamed—became known as the world's most famous barmaid.

### ***Helen David***

David was still bartending at the Brass Rail in Port Huron, Michigan, when she died in 2008 at 91.

David was born above an ice cream parlor owned by her family; in 1937, her mother converted it to a bar when her father died and times got tough.

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According to a published interview with David's cousin, Tony Abou-Ganim, a bartender and author of *The Modern Mixologist*, David was startled by her mother's decision, telling her that proper ladies didn't run saloons. David's mother said something to the effect of, "A lady is a lady no matter where you put her, but she needs to have a buck in her pocket!" David was a modern lady pioneer of bar hospitality, providing her employees with sick leave, paid holiday, and health insurance. And her life is still honored in the industry—every year at Tales of the Cocktail, the country's premier annual spirits conference, a bartender is given the Helen David Lifetime Achievement Award.

## **The New Guard**

Acclaimed bartender and author Gary Regan wrote this in his 2003 book *The Joy of Mixology*:

"In 1973, when I started tending bar in New York, there were very few female bartenders in the city. Bar owners justified their hiring practices by claiming they needed men to carry cases of beer, heave garbage pails full of ice, and deal with unruly customers, but times have changed. I would venture to guess that there are now just as many women as men behind the stick in Manhattan: they carry cases, heave garbage pails full of ice, and deal with unruly customers just as successfully as any man—as long as they are cut out to be bartenders. And of course, the same applies to men—if bartending isn't in their hearts, they won't do a good job. The rule of thumb is this: A good bartender, male or female can handle any given situation at any given time in any given bar."

Thankfully, that sentiment is being heeded, and there are a number of women making names for themselves in today's booze biz, like Aisha Sharpe who is revered in the industry for her cocktail consulting work with her firm Contemporary Cocktails Inc. and has had recipes featured in *The New York Times* and *New York Magazine*. Julie Reiner is another. After an apprenticeship under "King Cocktail" Dale DeGroff in the late 1990s, Reiner made her mark with innovative drinks before opening revered New York City bars Flatiron Lounge and Clover Club. Reiner's recipes have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Playboy*, *Food & Wine*, and more. Audrey Saunders also worked under Dale DeGroff in the late 1990s before opening two successful bars focusing on fresh, classic cocktails called Blackbird and Pegu Club, both in New York City. And Charlotte Voisey was recognized by the James Beard Foundation in 2009 for her contribution to the trade, is a brand ambassador for Hendrick's gin, and has even appeared as a contestant on *Top Chef*. Her acclaim started back in 2002 when she opened a classic cocktail bar in London called Apartment 195 and subsequently became U.K. Bartender of the Year—quite a feat in Britain's male-dominated scene. Lynnette Marrero, who wrote the foreword for this book, is not only a celebrated bartending queen in New York, but she also cofounded Speed Rack—the first national cocktail competition to honor and engage top female bartenders—with colleague Ivy Mix in 2011.

In addition to those slinging drinks behind the bar, there are also plenty of entrepreneurial ladies following their bliss in the booze business now. A few that come to mind include Ana Lorena Vásquez Ampié and Joy Spence, the master blenders of Zacapa and Appleton rums, respectively, Maribel Garcia, the master distiller of Don Diego Santa tequila, Lesley Gracie, the master distiller of Solerno blood orange liqueur, Melanie Asher, master distiller of Macchu Pisco, and Erin Brophy and Mhairi Voelsgen, founders of BroVo Spirits. You'll find interviews with several others throughout this book and on [BoozeforBabes.com](http://BoozeforBabes.com). They are pioneers, inspired by a select few before them like Bessie

Williamson, who ran the Laphroaig scotch distillery from 1954 to 1967, or Marjorie Samuels, who built a renowned brand when she gave Maker's Mark bourbon its name, designed its distinctive label and came up with its signature wax seal in 1959.

### **Meet Ladies United for the Preservation of Endangered Cocktails (LUPEC)**

In addition to the libation-loving ladies we discussed earlier, who are elevating women in the business and exposing female imbibers to the world of drink through the craft of bartending, there is a nationwide organization that is doing the same. With a twinkle in their eyes and swizzle sticks in their glasses, the Ladies United for the Preservation of Cocktails (LUPEC) are hell-bent on creating an atmosphere in which classy broads can honor the spirits of the past, while continuing the "150-year American tradition of dangerous women calling themselves ladies while they chip away at the patriarchy." The organization also encourages the collection of throwback cocktail recipes and the use of vintage barware as a nod to women's mark on the barroom tradition. Over the past couple of years LUPEC has thrown a Macallan scotch party during New York Fashion Week, a whiskey cocktail soiree honoring International Women's Day, and more.

Check [LUPEC.org](http://LUPEC.org) for more details on upcoming events and how you might be able to become a member.

Despite their progress, many of these bartenders, representatives and businesswomen admit they've experienced gender discrimination during their tenures. Heather Greene, a former brand ambassador for Glenfiddich scotch, said when she began marketing the spirit she'd spend a half hour explaining to a room full of men that she knew her stuff so she could earn their respect. When Lisa Laird Dunn, vice president of Laird's Applejack brandy, took her post, she was told by a client that he wouldn't buy his whiskey from a woman. But those instances are luckily getting fewer and farther between. The bottom line is that there is countless female talent out there, ladies who are masterfully pouring drinks and producing liquor like a boss, all representing just how badass booze-loving babes can be. So next time you order a drink, raise a glass to the ladies who've raised the bar!



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