

Implementing A Measured Defense



The harsh reality is that bars are often nickled and dimed into submission, and it often happens with every flick of the wrist. The problem is that lax or nonexistent controls invariably lead to bartenders over-pouring or under-pouring the liquor portions in drinks. Each negatively impacts your guests, and both have serious consequences.

For example, adding an extra $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of spirits to a cocktail whose recipe calls for an ounce results in the drink's cost percentage jumping 20%. After the fifth time it happens, you've essentially lost a drink's worth of product, as well as the sales proceeds it would have generated. More problematic is that each drink now contains 20% more alcohol.

In today's .08 society, most people are acutely aware of how much alcohol they can safely consume and therefore they set limits for themselves. Over-portioning alcohol in drinks places the public at risk and increases an operator's legal liability. The steady rise in alcohol-related litigation necessitates that operators implement measures to reduce their exposure to liquor liability.

Under-pouring is an equally vexing problem for operators. Instead of using the specified $\frac{1}{4}$ ounces of liquor in a drink, for instance, the bartender cuts short the pour at an ounce. After the fourth short-pour, the bartender will have created a surplus shot of liquor to sell. Guess

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who pockets the proceeds? The bar's pour cost remains unaffected and the theft will likely go undetected. The true victims of the scheme are your guests and the bar's good name.

Controlling portioning through the use of jiggers or shot glasses is a sensible, cost-effective solution. One of the principal benefits is that it's easier for all parties involved to see exactly how much liquor is being poured in a drink. Using jiggers decreases inadvertent over-pouring or under-pouring and greatly facilitates drink consistency.

While accurate, hand measuring is the slowest method of pouring liquor; primarily because it requires two hands to pour a shot—one to hold the bottle and the other to hold the jigger. It requires training and practice to master the technique and attain the necessary wrist speed. Jiggers can also retain the residue of a previously poured product, potentially affecting the taste of subsequent drinks.

Finally, there are concepts where the use of a jigger might be considered inappropriate. One example would be a country & western bar where free-wielding, free-pouring bartenders more closely follow the concept.

Between steadily increasing state and federal taxes, you can anticipate that the wholesale cost of spirits will continue to rise. Perhaps now more than ever, bartenders who play fast and loose with liquor do pose a monumental problem for beverage operators. The solution is portion control.

Step-By-Step

1. Hand-held measuring liquor utilizes a technique called "hinging." Prior to measuring out the liquor, the jigger is brought in contact to the rim of the glass. When the correct measure is reached, the jigger is tipped into the glass and the liquor bottle is returned to its upright position. The four separate motions—readying the measure, the pour, ending the pour, and emptying the measure—should be performed in one rapid motion as if there were a hinge between the measure and the lip of the glass.

2. Make sure that you hold the jigger as level as possible to ensure arriving at an accurate measurement

3. The jigger should stay in the bartender's hand until all liquor portions in an order are poured, and then returned to the pour mat in the square space intended for that purpose. This will ensure that time isn't wasted searching it.

4. Jiggers can retain a residual, holdover flavor of the previously poured product, thereby affecting the taste of subsequent drinks. A quick rinse will prevent this from happening.

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