

# Designing a Tasteful—and Fun —At-Home Bar

It's important to marry convenience and style

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Reflective finishes and comfortable seating define this bar aboard a yacht designed by Achille Salvagni.  
*MASSIMO LISTRI*

## Designer's Corner



Entertaining at home is so much more spirited when you have a place to belly up with friends. “A home bar will always be a space with a good connotation, unlike other areas, such as home offices, that can remind people of work and the outside

world,” said Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York City.

It’s also convenient, said Robyn Branch of Robyn Branch Design in Fernandina Beach, Florida. “A bar in the home gives an added convenience to serve guests without leaving the conversation,” Ms. Branch said. “Often times with an open floor plan, guests will congregate in the kitchen and clog up the workings of a lovely dinner party. A satellite bar keeps the guests spread out,” she said.

For advice on designing your drinking and entertaining space with style, follow these tips from the pros.

## **Determine the Logistics**

“Ideally it would be located in or on the way to the living room, which would likely also be close to the dining room. Of course, you may also choose to have a bar space in your garden or near a swimming pool, depending on where your house is located.

“The entertaining area around a bar is as crucial as the bar itself and needs to fit homogeneously so there is a clear flow between the two areas. The area should be flexible to allow for the coming and going of guests and it should feel intimate for two people as well as comfortable for larger numbers. I often place an emphasis on banquettes, coffee tables, and side tables when designing a home bar. Additionally, the seats should be comfortable enough to stay in for the entire evening if needed.

“For the bar itself, the use of noble materials such as parchment, wood marquetry, bronze, onyx, and marble, among others, should be complementary to the drinks that will be served. For example, an 18-year-old single malt whisky should be savored, enjoyed, and served from a bar that respects this heritage. A whisky connoisseur will have very different drinking habits from a gin collector, and a cocktail enthusiast would require differing needs.”

— **Rome, Italy-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni**

## **Consider Form and Function**

“A home bar has to be functional, yet inviting. More often than not, it is primarily a space for storage, so being able to fit glasses, shakers, liquor, flowers, and fun accessories is key. I like to include drawers that are custom made for a client’s favorite bottles of wine. I also think it’s a good idea to incorporate a bright color palette not only into the bar itself but also in the surrounding space; it can liven up an area that is often overlooked.

"Flexibility is key in an at home bar. You need to be able to accommodate everyone from intimate groups to larger gatherings. Banquettes and club chairs are always great choices."



A stately wood bar cabinet designed by Phillip Thomas is a refined addition to a kitchen counter area.  
*Eric Piasecki*

— **Phillip Thomas, founder and principal of Phillip Thomas Inc. in New York City**

## **Decide on the Details**

“Essentials include basic liquors, good glasses, a corkscrew, a few mixing tools, a martini shaker, and a bowl for munchies. It doesn’t hurt to import some limes in a bowl and an ice bucket if there is no refrigeration.

"The Serge De Troyer bars are unique because they sit hidden until opened up—beautiful travel trunks in hiding. Baker and Kindel bars are often a taller cabinet with legs, so that serving height is convenient.

"Swivel chairs are my favorite for satellite bars. Swivel Lou Fe chairs accommodate the view and the conversation or action.

"Exotic coverings also make the bar special—leather, bone, lacquer—as well as fanciful decorations such as special hardware."



A portable standalone bar trunk like this one by Serge De Troyer lends character and charm to a living room designed by Robyn Branch.

*Jessie Preza*

**—Robyn Branch of Robyn Branch Design in Fernandina Beach, Florida**

## **Go Stylish**

"We like to select different metals to give our bars a private members club feel. Choose only one or two, like bronze and nickel, and go with it on all your pieces. Everything from your Moscow mule cups all the way down to your trim. The mistake people make is mixing metals too much.

"Choose quality-based materials then work through layering. For example, you have your hard furnishes—marbles and metals—then we'll bring in fabric colors and

patterns to live on top.

"The use of leather and metal in our bar seating is inspired by the origins of London's members clubs from 150 years ago. They have strong materials such as leathers and wood on the walls with metal detailing. We've taken those materials and used them in different ways. The stools are bespoke but with a more contemporary back. We're actually using handbag leathers from the same suppliers of Hermes leathers because it's noticeably softer than traditional leather."



Elegant gold detailing and bright yellow leather stools give this bar designed by March & White the look of modern luxury.

*Leon Chew*

— **Elliot March of March & White, based in London, New York, and Los Angeles**

## **Stock Up on the Essentials**

“Things that make the bar include: great mood lighting, a counter surface which is easily wipeable, a great backsplash with a bronze mirror or bronze metal, a wet sink if possible, an ice maker, and a wine cooler.

"If the bar is housed in a piece of furniture, it should have adjustable shelves for glasses and bottles, at least 16 inches of depth storage for wine bottles, drawers for corkscrews, bottle openers, and knives. A small chopping block is also a good idea.

"In our bars, we use custom-colored back painted glass novelty woods and custom metals. Upholstered leather bar stools with a simple footrest are perfect seating at a bar. If there is enough space, you could do upholstered club chairs along with drinks tables. Smoked glass or mirrored walls, low interesting lights, and rich woods and fabrics add a soothing and sophisticated touch."



This dining room designed by Jenny Kirschner features a Bob's Bar by Brett Design, which fits perfectly in a small space.

*Ryan Dausch*

—**Brett Beldock of Brett Design, Inc. in New York City**