

Q&A

Q: Can you tell me a bit about how Liquor Lab came to be?

A: Prior to the spirits industry, I attended West Point military academy and served for a few years. Next, I decided that I wanted to do something fun and went to work in sales at Jim Beam. While I was there, I became a Spirits Specialist teaching classes and hosting whiskey dinners. One night I thought, there has to be a better way to do this. From there, I created the Liquor Lab concept, which was consumer-focused and based around different themes, and tested the pilot for a year in Chicago.

Q: What was the first sign that Liquor Lab would be a big success?

A: They say if you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere because the customers decide what they are doing that night. We knew Liquor Lab was going to work when we would sell out right before a class and receive 15 emails the next morning saying, "I want to come tonight because my friends said it was awesome."

Q: What about Liquor Lab appeals to your customer base?

A: We learn to make sandwiches as kids; however, we don't learn to make a dirty martini as an adult. Our goal is to help people over that hurdle and remove any mystique around bartending. Most of our customers pick up a shaker and ask, "What does this do?" And these are people who spend a lot of time in bars! Part of the reason I came up with the Dollar Cocktail kit is because of the disparity between the cost and perceived value of a homemade cocktail. We're giving people the tools and knowledge, like our annual recipe book, to make drinks at home the right way.

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Q: You're making mixology approachable.

A: Exactly. People see a bartender making a drink and think, that's magic. That perception stops consumers from trying new cocktails. Our bartenders are the best in the world yet can talk to anyone. I believe that is why our customer base runs the spectrum from a 22-year old birthday girl to 70-year old couples celebrating anniversaries. There aren't too many places other than the movie theatre where those two demographics can mix.

Q: How do you choose your bartenders?

A: They have to be graduated from the ego, which means they have generally opened hundreds of bars, are sick of working until 4am, and looking to build their personal brand. They are also entertainers - quick witted and great storytellers.

Q: What is something new that we can look forward to at Liquor Lab?

A: I'm really excited about our "90's TV Show cocktail class," where we'll make Saved by the Bell drinks. People crave nostalgia and to be taken back in time.

Q: What do you hope customers walk away with?

A: Understanding how to make a balanced drink will benefit you in the long run. It's cool to be a host who also can share cocktail knowledge in a non-snooty way.

Q: Even if someone has the basics down they're doing good.

A: Exactly! One of my favorite customer stories was when a woman who had attended a class here said to me, "I've ordered a spicy margarita at every bar I've been to since." All she knew was to say, "If you have a jalapeño, muddle it in," which made her feel good. We live in a hurry up society where people will order wine instead of asking questions. They feel silly if they don't know and I want to combat that..

Q: What's your favorite thing about what you do?

A: There is nothing better than hearing someone say, "That class was unbelievable!" It's why I am driven to take Liquor Lab everywhere.

Every detail is geared toward customer experience. I am constantly asking myself, "would I enjoy this?" If someone presents me with an idea, I transport myself to the couch and pretend that I just saw it advertised on Facebook. If I would leave the house for it, then let's do it. ✨

Right: Owen Meyer

