

Noah U. Shussett

noah.shussett@gmail.com • 412.860.7844 • noahshussett.com

300 Vernon Street, #3, Oakland, CA 94610

People have been serving drinks in inns and taverns for thousands of years, but today is arguably the most exciting time to bartend in American history. Never has there been so many great ingredients and such interest in culinary arts which combined have fueled a cocktail renaissance and craft brewing revolution. Naturally, service and mixology has progressed with these trends and there is no longer room for those who desire to stand around and look good in this line of work.

It is not easy though to create truly appealing cocktails and make people feel like their bar stool is their bar stool. It is never effortless to draw people to the bar, get them to stay longer than they planned and get them to come back sooner than they expected, but the great ones, then like now, make it look effortless.

Bartenders are the rarest of hospitality employees in that they create the product and serve it. There is no one else to blame if someone is unhappy at your bar, it is truly your stage. Using a jigger to create cocktails doesn't make you cheap, like free pouring doesn't make you look cool; understanding the progression from sling to punch is as important as knowing who "the Jupiter Olympus of the bar" refers to and which country we invaded last. Bartending is a combination of culinary curiosity, determination and daring while facilitating relief from toil and being a wealth of information and a hub for camaraderie.

Washington, DC, has a rich history of blending spirits stretching back to the days of "Rum Row," Shoemaker's Bar and Colonel Joseph's Rickey's parched palate on a summer day. It is here where I cut my teeth and rounded off my game from suds-slinger to master mixologist.

[Kramerbooks & Afterwords Cafe & Grill](#) is a DC cultural landmark as a 36 year old cafe and bookstore featuring espresso, a full bar and three menus of food a day. Located on top of one of the busiest subway stops in the metro region it is a destination for the politico, tourist and student alike. Bartending at the cafe on a daily basis included added responsibility of handling the cafe's entire carry-out orders, receiving of massive orders of product and pouring your own cappuccinos. Efficiency was king.

When I moved on to [Tryst](#) I took on leading a bar within a yearly-award winning coffee shop and lounge. With the experience I had gained we began directing our bar based on some whimsy and old truths. We dropped the flavored vodkas and began making our own infusions and bitters. I re-vamped our beer list including being one of the first five establishments to offer DC's second operating brewery. My education and work experience with words and the online world helped in promoting weekly events and educating customers and staff. Our seasonal cocktail list consisted of my recipes more than 99% of the time. With last season's DC Craft Bartenders Guild's Rickey competition, the Tryst bar had caught up to the Tryst coffee when our beverage director accepted second place for our team.

Arriving in California I have found opportunities that offer a wealth of knowledge at my fingertips in exciting, fast-paced environments. I completed the first level of the Cicerone Certification Program with the help of [21st Amendment Brewery](#) in San Francisco, and I joined NightClub and Bar Magazine's 2010 Bartender of the Year H. Joseph Ehrmann and the talented staff of the city's second oldest bar, [Elixir Saloon](#) where we draw on over 150 years of service to continue the magic of the "Barbary Coast" of old and award winning cocktails of new. I was a winner of the Wild Turkey [Behind The Barrel](#) Contest and after a long weekend with the legendary Jimmy Russell in the rolling hills of Kentucky I decided to move on to a new challenge upon return to San Francisco: managing a Top 100 Bay Area restaurant.

After a busy time in management I have settled back behind the stick, collaborating and hand cutting ice at [Duende](#) in Oakland and with great nostalgia for the steel city that raised me at [Giordano Brothers](#) in San Francisco. Bartending is a noble craft, arguably more than most, as there is nothing more noble than making someone happy. I enjoy this craft every time I fill a water glass or write a 50 page training manual. That's what makes great bartenders and great managers; the love for the work. I've seen it across this country that people will flock to share that love.

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