



INTRODUCTION—

Set-ups

No argument: cocktails are sexy and sophisticated. They sparkle with mysterious possibilities. Imagine a night in a neon-lit club. A handsome man spots a gorgeous woman. He sends a drink over. She wonders: who is this good-looking man who just bought me a Cosmopolitan? He wonders: if I buy her two, will she go back to my place? After three, will she still be standing?

Endless seduction lingers in a cocktail glass regardless of season or setting. The beauty of a cold clear martini, a glass of perfect red sangria, or a sparkling vintage concoction transformed into a twenty-first century incarnation is liquid anticipation. For some, the thrill is in the warmth that comes with downing one of these potables. For others, it's all in the shake, stir, or blend.

When I was four, I toddled into a bar adjoined to a restaurant owned by my parents' friend. Instantly, I was hooked, not by the darkness of the joint or the local television celebs who frequented the place, but

by the jewels behind the bar. The bottles of amber and emerald, sapphire and ruby hypnotized me. I had never seen anything more beautiful.

The fascination continued through my teens. Whenever I dined out, a Shirley Temple was a must. My dad preferred scotch and water; my mother straight water. Curiosity about how liquor tasted was never my game; the life of a barfly was hardly appealing. No, I wanted to mix. Let me behind the bar and I'd whip up a concoction to rival any.

Eventually bartending school beckoned as a wacky adventure I longed to have, and I mixed to my heart's content. Mixology is certainly a handy trade to have at parties to win friends and influence people. And practice does, indeed, make perfect.

It's impossible to learn all the drinks in the world. Literally thousands exist and more are created every day along with new liqueurs—some even appear to glow in the dark. Certainly, in the early part of the twentieth century, a mixer would have better luck learning all the cocktails than he or she would today. Mixologists often named cocktails after the hotel or bar that birthed them or for the patron who desired them. Cocktails such as the Daiquiri and the Mojito became famous in other countries and found their way to popularity in the United States. In today's fast-paced world of starlets and playboys jetting around the globe, the international cocktail is no longer so easy to define.

But a good drink is. Whether it's a Bloody Mary before noon, a non-alcoholic Safe Sex on the Beach after a sweaty workout, or a Garza's nightcap at bedtime, a well-made drink can be exhilarating, like, well, sex. And, depending on the category, just as complicated. Take tropical drinks, which are built with various kinds of rum and juices to get that island feel. But the classic drinks, the ones that have stayed through the decades from Sinatra to Sting, often only have two ingredients, but they are no less for it.

In the end, drinking—like wardrobes and lovers—comes down to personal taste. You can wear the most popular fashions, but that isn't nearly as much fun as finding your own style or yes, your own cocktail. That's where this book comes in. Use it to try something new and unexpected. Maybe, after a healthy amount of sampling, you'll find that you really do like the same kind of martinis your friends, or even your dear old dad, like. Or you may simply be happy to stick with the frozen daiquiri you loved in college. With a little courage and experimentation, though, you might just find your drink of choice is something else entirely.

So explore the liquor store. Buy something exotic. Begin mixing. Expect a whole new world of adventure to open up. And remember this toast: may your enemies be lethargic and your lovers energetic.

Publisher's Note: This book and the recipes contained herein are intended for those of a legal drinking age. Please drink responsibly and ensure you and your guests have a designated driver when consuming alcoholic beverages.