

LUXURY BARTENDING

The Bar Opening Standard

Five checks before the first guest arrives. Your drinks can be excellent and the guest will already have formed an opinion before tasting one.

1 The menu in their hands

The menu is the first physical object your bar gives a guest, and it has been handled a few thousand times since anyone last looked at it properly. Pick up your own, today, as a stranger would.

Sticky, curled at the corner, or listing a cocktail you stopped making in spring — replace it before service, not next month.

FAILURE MODE Assuming the menu is fine because it was printed well. It was. A year ago.

2 The glass

Temperature first, polish second. A beautifully made drink in a room-temperature glass is a warm drink by the third sip, and the guest will blame the recipe rather than the glassware.

Chilled, polished under light, checked for the lip mark the machine leaves and the cloth misses.

FAILURE MODE Polishing for appearance and forgetting the freezer. The fault shows up two minutes after service, where nobody is watching.

3 The ice

The most-ignored ingredient in the building. It is the largest component of most drinks by volume, it takes on the smell of whatever it sits beside, and old ice makes every cocktail taste slightly of the fridge.

Fresh, clear, odour-free, and the right format for the drink — one block for the spirit-forward, cracked for the long.

FAILURE MODE Treating ice as equipment rather than an ingredient. Nobody tastes it until it's wrong.

4 The garnish

Cut today. A twist prepared yesterday has no oil left in it, which is the entire point of a twist. This is a five-minute job that decides whether the drink smells of anything as it reaches the guest.

Citrus cut within the hour, herbs held in water, nothing pre-cut sitting in a tray under the light.

FAILURE MODE Prepping garnish for the week. You have kept the shape and thrown away the aroma.

5 The first sip

Make one of your own signature drinks and taste it before the doors open. Recipes drift — a new bottling, a different batch of vermouth, a bartender who learnt it slightly wrong from the last one.

Made to spec, tasted, adjusted, and the adjustment told to everyone on shift.

FAILURE MODE Trusting the recipe card. The card hasn't changed. Everything around it has.

The Pre-Service Check

Ninety seconds, before the first guest. Print it, laminate it, tick it.

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| ☐ Menus clean, current, no discontinued drinks | ☐ Jiggers, strainers, tins clean and to hand |
| ☐ Back bar faced, labels forward, no dust on shoulders | ☐ Bar top dry, no rings, cloth out of sight |
| ☐ Glassware chilled and polished under light | ☐ Signature drink made and tasted to spec |
| ☐ Ice fresh, clear, no odour, correct format ready | ☐ Garnish tray covered and cold |
| ☐ Citrus cut within the hour | ☐ Stools aligned, no crumbs on the rail |
| ☐ Herbs in water, not on the board | ☐ Music level set before the room is empty, not after |
| ☐ Syrups dated and in date | ☐ Everyone on shift knows tonight's two recommendations |

How to use this with your team

One person signs it, every service. Not the most junior — the person who will be judged by the room.

This standard is drawn from the Luxury Bartending masterclass — filmed on property with the bartenders who run it. Seven masterclasses, taught by the people doing the work.

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