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# BAR NONE



KINK bar in Berlin  
Photo by Robert Rieger

ARTFUL BARS SERVE  
UP INSPIRATION FOR  
THE HOME  
By LINSEY STONCHUS

- 1 Design studio YSG suggests designating a theme when creating a home bar. Eileen's Bar (left) and Atomic Beer Project (right) both in Sydney, Australia
- 2 Design by YSG Studio, photo by Anson Smart

During the past two years, entertaining at home has taken on new meaning.

While nightlife will always offer unique appeal, a personal bar provides benefits of its own, acting as a refuge during spikes in the pandemic and achieving an intimacy that can only be found in the comfort of one's home.

"The past few years have transformed our daily routines into spending much more time in our homes," says Jay Jeffers, interior designer and founder of Jay Jeffers Inc. in San Francisco. "With increased entertaining at home, it's the perfect time to add a home bar or give yours an upgrade."

Best practice, according to Mr. Jeffers, is to look to bars up and running.

"Take inspiration from your favorite bar in real life," he says. "Think of where you want the bar to transport you, and then put your own spin on it."

Here are bars from Berlin to Sydney that are worth replicating.





3

Kerim Seiler's "Spaceknot" is the main attraction at KINK in Berlin. The fixture was handblown and transported from Italy within three months  
*Photo by Robert Rieger*

4

San Francisco designer Jay Jeffers recommends seeking inspiration from favorite bars when designing one for the home  
*Design by Jay Jeffers Inc., photo by Matthew Millman*



4

## SEEING THE LIGHT

Guests at KINK Bar and Restaurant in Berlin are immediately captivated by its one-of-a-kind Spaceknot light installation, hovering just over the center bar.

The piece came to be through sheer gut instinct as its founders and co-owners, Oliver Mansaray and Daniel Scheppan, determined what to do with the soaring 26-foot-high ceilings. The pair never wanted the bar to feel intimidating or pretentious. Rather they sought to create a space that felt welcoming, whether it was serving 30 guests or 300.

"When it came to the point of designing, we felt misunderstood," Mr. Mansaray says. "Quite often, when [designers] made suggestions, it felt a bit like it could be anywhere. We always felt like this could be a hotel lobby in Munich or New York, but it wasn't something I haven't seen or heard of."

"Then, at one point, we realized, 'OK, maybe we just should do it ourselves, right?'" he says.

The duo's attention to detail can be found within every corner of the room. The co-owners make a point to routinely sit in various areas of the bar to insert themselves in their patron's shoes.

"Sometimes we sit on a different seat or couch where we normally don't sit and then imagine, 'Could this be my favorite spot, or could it be someone's favorite spot?'" Mr. Mansaray says. "If we don't find any good reason that it could be someone's favorite spot, then we agree that we have to work on it."

After being unimpressed by standard lighting, they connected with Mr. Mansaray's friend, Kerim Seiler, who realized their most iconic spectacle, the Spaceknot light installation, in just three short months.

"The glass was mouth blown in Milan, and then they had to transport it from Milan to Berlin," Mr. Mansaray says. "It's kind of part of our sky. For anyone who enters the bar, the first thing they do is take out the mobile and take a picture. It's the most Instagrammable piece we have in our location."

While replicating the Spaceknot is no small feat, homeowners may not want to shy away from bold, show-stopping art as they design their home bars.

"What I like about art is, for some, they just walk by it and they might not recognize it," Mr. Mansaray says. "It might just make them feel more comfortable. For others, they might recognize the artist, or they really see the craftsmanship. Almost every guest can experience it their own way."

Ultimately, the key to any design is trusting one's intuition.

"Quite often, it somehow has to feel right," Mr. Mansaray says. "Worst case, I'd rather have something improvised than something we feel is halfway."

## DESIGN VIBES

Straying from improvisation, assigning a theme is another worthwhile strategy in renovating a home bar.

In residential and commercial projects alike, Sydney, Australia-based YSG Studio excels in delivering both highly relevant and compelling concepts.

Take, for example, Eileen's Bar, located in a downtown gin distillery. Its interior design theme strikes a balance between monochromatic simplicity and the vividness of its rich "juniper berry blue" shades found on walls, bar, staircase and furnishings, only broken up with splashes of copper. Its inspiration stemmed from its menu.

"What emerged was a robust, yet tactile sanctuary referencing native Australian elements in the form of crafted timbers and Four Pillars' star ingredient, the juniper berry," says Yasmine Ghoniem, director of YSG Studio.

Another Sydney bar, Atomic Brewery, located in the gritty neighborhood of Redfern, steered clear of simplicity. Instead, the establishment combines both midcentury and futuristic vibes.

"The design and mood had to draw on Redfern's unpolished creativity and tough community history, while seeking inspiration from the retro-tech coolness of the movie, *Tron*," Ms. Ghoniem says.

Transforming a derelict midcentury corner brick warehouse, retained grunge elements were spiced with acidic colors, slick plastics and gleaming metals, granting the multi-level space with a heady dose of CBGB's anarchy spritzed with futuristic Pan-Asian flair.

What was retained of the midcentury design was its exposed brickwork, layered paint and random graffiti. All the while, its color scheme feels like a glimpse into the future, as does the bar's time capsule.

"Marking the occasion of launching [Atomic Beer's] first combined microbrewery and taproom on the East Coast, a tattered safe – found on site – was filled with memorabilia from the neighborhood," Ms. Ghoniem says.

"Buried in the bathroom corridor, a digital timer directly above counts down to 2050 when its contents will be revealed to a new generation of patrons," she says.

Looking to a residential project that YSG worked on, the 1906 Apartment located near the waterfront in Sydney, was extraordinary in how it defied design expectations.

"Coastal market conventions were completely flipped by not treating the walls with white paint, customarily drawing the gaze towards the harbor, and by refraining from designing the layout of the apartment to solely face the water," Ms. Ghoniem says.

The interior experience is as equally rich and layered as the outside view. Dark hues including indigo walls are paired with decadent materials, including a rust and ochre-toned splashback and feature backdrop to the kitchen, plus plum-hued blinds over the windows.

5

Eileen's Bar features vivid blues inspired by the juniper berry, a signature ingredient on the menu

*Design by YSG Studio, photo by Anson Smart*

6

Keep lighting dim and decorative, similar to the seating at the Atomic Beer Project

*Design by YSG Studio, photo by Anson Smart*

7

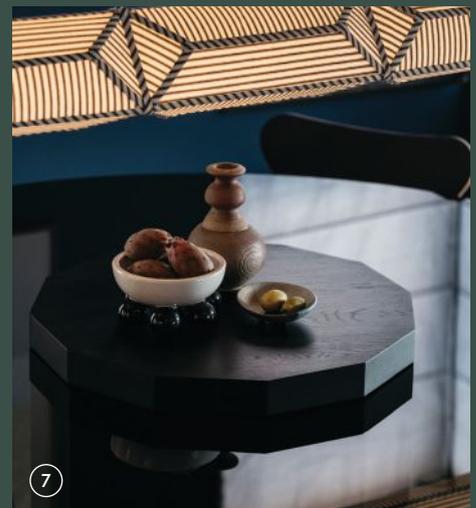
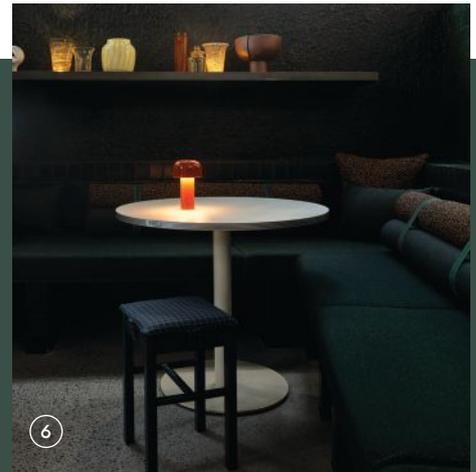
Bottles and ingredients can be set atop a tray to accent a bar-top, as in this Sydney apartment

*Design, YSG Studio, photo by Felix Forest*

8

Pick out classic materials, such as marble and concrete, to create statement countertops

*Design by YSG Studio, photo by Felix Forest*





“Home bars weather less wear and tear, so you can consider using beautiful stone for the surfaces without worrying too much about liquids marking them”

— YASMINE GHONIEM | YSG STUDIO

## CART BEFORE HOUSE

The aforementioned experts in San Francisco, Sydney and Berlin can all agree on one thing: the bar itself should take centerstage.

“Consider the bar the magnet of a space and don’t relegate it off to one end against a wall,” Ms. Ghoniem says. “People are after two key things with home bars: novelty and space-saving practicality.

“I recently designed a bar trolley so it can be wheeled into place,” she says. “It either sidles up to the kitchen island where, let’s face it, most guests congregate, or slinks over to the lounge area.

“Make sure your casters can be locked into place to keep the trolley stable when guests tend to become less so as the night progresses.”

Once a bartender himself, Mr. Mansaray points out that workflow should be considered when planning the layout of a home bar.

To test the functionality of his own bar, he or his staff would practice preparing a cocktail to see where they would reach to grab ingredients and tools. This helped them to identify in which areas they would strain to meet items. This way, they could reconfigure sore spots.

“Definitely add a small fridge under the counter, too, so you needn’t dash to the kitchen for ice, wine or chilled spirits,” Ms. Ghoniem says. “And don’t forget a hidden power socket for blender action.”

Looking to the aesthetic function of the design, one positive of the home bar is less traffic.

“Home bars weather less wear and tear, so you can consider using beautiful stone for the surfaces without worrying too much about liquids marking them, though make sure they accommodate a chopping board that can be hidden when not in use,” Ms. Ghoniem says.

Mr. Jeffers recommends picking out a classic material, such as marble or concrete, and creating an elegant statement with the countertops.

“You can also upgrade the backsplash in a unique pattern that matches your personal style,” he says. “A home bar is meant to be lively and fun, so I recommend going bold here.”

Lighting, too, plays its part.

“The lighting in the bar can set the tone for the entire design and vibe,” Mr. Jeffers says. “I love to add personality by incorporating LED lights, cabinet lighting or some unique hanging lights over the countertop.”

Another suggestion from Ms. Ghoniem is equally sensible.

“Integrate downlighting under a shelf above the drinks prep surface to spotlight the art of cocktail-making and consider using stunning tiles or stone as the backsplash, so it’s a stunning focal point when the cupboard’s open,” she says.

Finally, no bar is complete without the spirits and garnishings themselves.

“Get yourself a large, beautiful tray and put your prettiest bottles out on display,” Mr. Jeffers says. “Add a silver or brass cocktail shaker and perhaps a small bowl of fruit for drinks, like lemon, lime and oranges.

“Finally, add some fun glasses,” he says. “A coupe glass can be used for both Champagne and cocktails. Once you’re ready to serve, add a silver or glass ice bucket which can hold Champagne or ice for drinks. If you have any decanters, pour some of the liquor in there and you’re ready to say cheers.”

WITH THE RIGHT TOUCHES, staying in has never felt like such the event.

Bearing in mind advice from expert designers, such updates of the domestic watering hole can certainly create an unparalleled space.

Of course, KINK, Eileen’s Bar and Atomic Brewery are worthy of any travel bucket list.

Whether at home or on the town, everything from the theme to the position of the bar and the art comes down to striking the tone that the homeowner seeks to create.

“It is way more about atmosphere,” Mr. Mansaray says. “What emotions do we want to trigger?” ||¶