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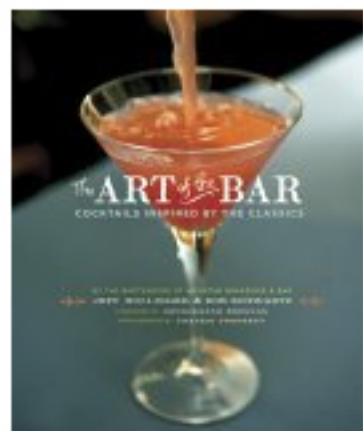
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The Art of the Bar

 Posted by [Brenda Pederson](#)  January 22, 2007



We recently received a copy of [The Art of the Bar: Cocktails Inspired by the Classics](#) to review. Over the last few days I've taken a look at this eye-catching book.

The book is authored by Jeff Hollinger and Rob Schwartz, current and former bartenders, respectively at [Absinthe Brasserie & Bar](#) in San Francisco, which is

known for its innovative and well-crafted cocktails. While the title would suggest this is a cocktail recipe book that is not quite right, although there are a number of recipes in the book.

Much of the book is dedicated to education of one sort or another: the history of classic cocktails is covered; there's a section on tools with another section on what is called your best tool - your senses; there's information on how to make a new cocktail from one you already know by substituting similar ingredients much as Robert has been [teaching you](#) in his [Mixology 101 columns](#). There are also some handy resource guides like a list of glass types and what they are used for and general classifications of cocktail types. The photos are gorgeous and the recipes are straight-forward and easy to follow.

One of the features I really like is a two-page spread at the very beginning called "The Cocktail Menu". This handy guide lists every drink recipe in the book (if I counted correctly that would be 96), the ingredients you'd need to concoct the drink and then the page number on which the full details will be found. This is a great way to either figure out what you need to have on hand to make any particular drink or to look at what you have on hand to see what options you have.

Even with all these good things if I was browsing through mixology books at my local bookstore I'm not sure I would actually buy this book. There just are too many stories and too much background information. I think that it is all very useful and well written but when I look at a 140+ page book (and a large book at that - it is about 11.5" x 9.5") I expect more than 96 recipes.

I understand that the authors are trying to give you a glimpse of bartending processes and protocol but after awhile it seems that it might be a bit more information than a home bartender needs. Just flipping through the book my first impression was of page after page of text. I had to slow my flipping down to make sure there were actually recipes in the book and I mainly did that because I needed to write this post. If I'd been in a bookstore I probably would have just set the book back down and moved onto something that seemed to have a better balance between education and recipes.

I guess this book falls into the new category we're seeing in all types of cooking books - where the story behind the recipe is deemed as important as the recipe. While I think this sort of book has a place on our bookshelves, where it becomes most interesting is when you feel you know the authors. If that's the case, I would expect this book to be very-well accepted in San Francisco but maybe not as well where the authors are not so well-known.

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