

BLUEPRINT | POURING RIBBONS

A Bar That Serves the Bartender



THE workplace of a bartender is hemmed in by tradition as well as space; at most bars, the same basic setup prevails. But at Pouring Ribbons, a second-floor saloon that opened in September on Avenue B in the East Village, the four partners in Alchemy Consulting created a new model, with myriad time- and space-saving details that give the bartender a fighting edge. "It's like driving a Maserati," said one partner, Toby Maloney. He and the others drew on their experience helping to design and open successful cocktail bars in Chicago, Nashville, New York and elsewhere. Then they worked with the design firm Warren Red, with solid (and liquid) results. **ROBERT SIMONSON**

Pictured above, Joaquín Simó. Below, Troy Sidle. Both are partners and bartenders.

**SPEED RAIL**

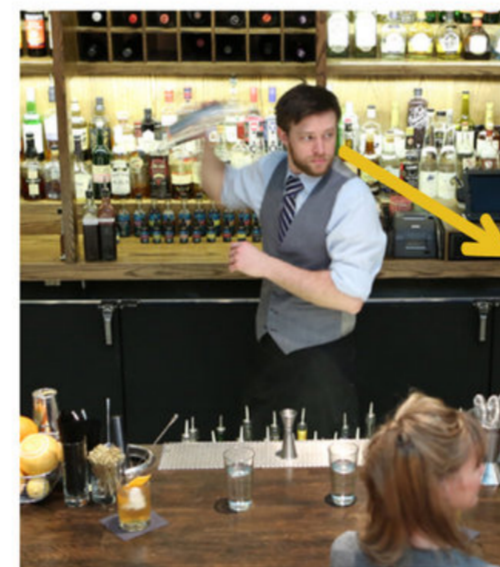
In bars the world over, the "well" bottles can be found in the speed rail, directly below and in front of the bartender. At Pouring Ribbons, bottles are grouped not by general consumer preferences, but by drink recipe.

**REACH**

The mixologist's tight workspace is called a cockpit. The designers imagined three concentric circles around each bartender. The smallest circle, an arm's reach, contains everything essential to making a drink. The second, called the pivot circle, includes less-needed items like liqueurs for drinks not on the current menu. And the third, one step away, contains occasional needs like sipping liquors.

**DEPTH**

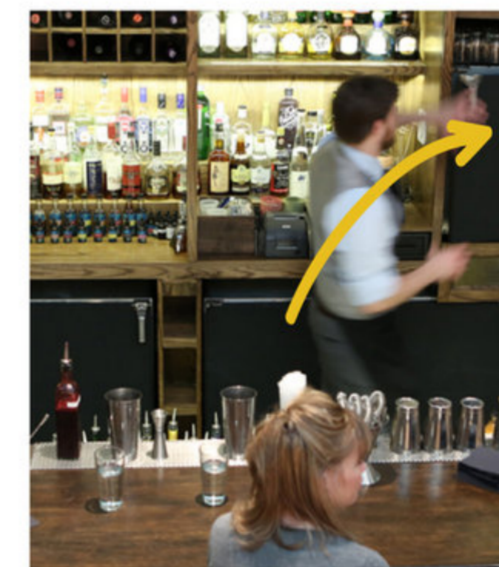
Bars often inherit their setups from their predecessors. Given the chance to create from scratch, the Pouring Ribbons team called for a bar shallower than most — 30 inches deep, so bartenders can see when a customer needs another drink, and don't have to reach far for anything.

**FLOOR**

The floor behind the bar is a pharmacist-worthy seven inches higher than that of the main room. This allows bartenders to reach higher shelves on the back bar, and to keep a closer eye on customers.

**GLASSWARE**

The designers chose a small rack for glassware, so glasses don't have time to gather dust. The bottoms of the speed rail racks are cushioned with plastic to muffle the clash of glass and metal.

**ERGONOMICS**

Each sink is equipped with a foot pedal, eliminating the need to stoop to turn faucets. And while most places tuck their mini-freezers under the bar, here they are all at eye level, making it easy to retrieve frosty coupe glasses. Mr. Maloney said he learned from experience: "When I thought about doing 100 knee bends every night..."

**STEP SHELVES**

Pouring Ribbons has little back-room space for storage. Solution: an unusually tall back bar, with enough shelves to hold every needed liquor. To make the upper reaches accessible without a stepladder, Warren Red installed shelves that bartenders can step into and climb, with nautical-style cleats to hang on to. Also, Mr. Maloney said, "It's cool and fun."