

# Cocktail shaker style matters

By Anne Brockhoff

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Eddie Crane makes shaking a cocktail look easy. Working behind the bar at the Drop in midtown, Crane deftly fills a glass tumbler, caps it with the metal half of his Boston shaker and hoists it aloft in an easy rhythm that creates effervescent and thoroughly cold results.

But watching him during a recent visit makes me wonder: Why use that style of shaker? How do you get it to seal? How hard and how long do you shake?

Let's start with the shaker itself. They've been around for a good, long while, according to Dale DeGroff's *The Craft of the Cocktail* (Clarkson N. Potter, 2002). The first patent for a "cocktail shaking apparatus" was filed in 1872, and hundreds of versions followed, he writes. Two styles survived into modern times: the cobbler shaker and the Boston shaker.

The elegantly shaped cobbler shaker is usually what you see in old movies and sleek new cocktail books. It's often metal with a large tumbler and a top with a built-in strainer that makes it easy to master.

Bartenders like Crane, though, prefer the Boston shaker, with its pint glass, metal tumbler and separate strainer. The glass lets you eyeball ingredients as they go in and can be used for the occasional stirred cocktail; its simple design makes clean-up a snap.

So how do you do it?

Start with ice. Crane recommends filling the pint glass one-third to one-half full and then adding spirits, juices and so on. Then cap with the metal half and shake. Easy enough, right? Not if you're like me. I can't always get the two halves to seal and so tend to shake my drinks over the kitchen sink, just in case.

The trick, Crane says, is to hit the metal half once or twice with the heel of your hand, and then turn the whole thing over and give the bottom of the glass another thump. To shake, hold the metal tumbler in the palm of one hand, wrapping a couple of fingers around the glass. If you have big hands like Crane (monster hands, he calls them), that's enough. If you don't, hold the top of the glass tumbler with your other hand.

Now for the fun part: shaking. Bartenders in Slovakia and Japan have invented what they call the hard shake, a mysterious style that bounces ice cubes in four different directions inside the shaker (to see a demonstration, go to [www.tinyurl.com/5upeox](http://www.tinyurl.com/5upeox)).

For the rest of us, the usual method works fine.

Crane holds his shaker over one shoulder, smoothly giving it about 15 fast, hard shakes. DeGross recommends making your shaker sound like a machine gun while slowly counting to 10. Nick Mautone says to shake for 10 or 15 seconds, until the shaker is almost painfully cold to hold, in his *Raising the Bar* (Artisan, 2004).

Whatever mark you use, the goal is to aerate the ingredients while completely combining and chilling them — but without pulverizing the ice or watering the drink too much.

To unseal the shaker and find out how well you did, set the metal half on the bar. Grasp it firmly in one hand, hit the top of the rim with the other. If that doesn't work, rotate the shaker and try again.

Strain the drink (the Hawthorne strainer, the one with the spring, is usually used with a Boston shaker) into a prepared cocktail glass. Is it a bit frothy? Are there minute ice crystals on top? Is it really, really cold?

“These tiny details can elevate one bartender's concoction over another's,” Crane says.

Want to see a dozen of the area's best in action? Then plan to attend the Greater Kansas City Bartending Competition at 6 p.m. Aug. 10 at the Uptown Theater. Proceeds benefit the HALO Foundation; for ticket information, go to [www.halo.org/worldwide.org/barcomp08.htm](http://www.halo.org/worldwide.org/barcomp08.htm).

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### **Sparkling blueberry lemon martini**

It takes practice to know how long and hard to shake. What tastier way to learn than with this summer “drink of the moment” recipe from the Drop?

Makes 1 drink

2 ounces homemade blueberry-infused vodka or Stolichnaya Blueberi vodka

1 ounce homemade lemonade

Splash sweet sparkling wine

4 or 5 fresh blueberries, for garnish

Fill shaker halfway with ice, add vodka, lemonade and sparkling wine. Shake and strain into a cocktail glass. Garnish with fresh blueberries.

*Per drink: 152 calories (2 percent from fat), trace fat (no saturated fat), no cholesterol, 4 grams carbohydrates, trace protein, 7 milligrams sodium, trace dietary fiber.*

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@ To watch Eddie Crane demonstrate the proper way to shake a martini, go to **KansasCity.com/food**.

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