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At-Home Bars: Entertain Stylishly

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to inspire changes within the home. Here's a toast to one of the latest: the return (and update) of the at-home bar.



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by Barbara Ballinger

Key Takeaways:

- Homeowners should find the best spot for mixing and pouring, with room for all the bar accessories.
- Decide if it's mostly for liquor storage or if they want to provide full service with a sink and refrigerator.
- They can add some glam to the decor with a luxe stone countertop, mirrored backsplash, and good LED lighting.

In addition to spurring designated work-from-home spaces, larger kitchen islands, and more relaxing outdoor living areas, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought back the at-home bar trend in a renaissance of home entertaining.

What started with Zoom cocktail gatherings and mixology events has stirred more homeowners to create an at-home bar.

In its [2021 Houzz Emerging Home Design Trends Report](#), Houzz, the online design source, found that searches for home bars and wine cellars both were up nearly four times from the prior year.

“People have been relying on their homes to provide new avenues of activity and entertainment since the beginning of the pandemic,” says Julie Noble, senior communications manager.

The concept isn’t new, however. At-home bars were a centerpiece for entertaining guests in the 1950s and 1960s. A certain cohort may recall the scene in the 1967 movie, “The Graduate,” when Mrs. Robinson sat down at her home bar and asked college-grad Benjamin what he wanted to drink.

Today, homeowners have adjusted their room designs and decors themselves to bring together the furnishing needed for a bar. Some are as simple as bottles of liquor and wine, along with an ice bucket, glasses, napkins, stirrers, and coasters on top of a counter or big tray. Others are professionally designed with added features such as shelves, cabinetry, a sink, and a refrigerator or wine cooler.

Dallas-based architect [Eddie Maestri, AIA, of Studio Maestri](#), is among the professionals who have found the at-home bar to be an increasingly popular client request.

“Every single project we have currently involves a bar of some sort,” he says. “We are doing a lot of floating shelving on brass, incorporating mirrors into the back wall, for sure. Whether it has a sink just depends on the space and if the client wants one.”

Maestri, himself, has an at-home bar with a sink and ice maker. He also just completed a project for a client converting a dining room into a bar.

The styling of home bars has also evolved, says real estate salesperson [Jennifer Ames Lazzar of Engel & Volkers](#) in Chicago.

“They used to be a formula: base cabinets, upper cabinets with glass doors, granite top, sink, and refrigerator,” she says. “Now, they are often more artfully designed with floating shelves, LED lighting in a channel on the underside of the shelf, and beautiful hardware.”



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