

FREEHUGS · LLC · MMXXVI

Old
Friend

Bartender Handbook

How to run our bar like the heart of the room — the craft, the hospitality, the speed, the spirits and the list, and how we take care of every guest and each other.

Role: Bartender / Bar Lead · Edition 1 · 2026 · Old Friend · 166 E. Lancaster Ave, Wayne, PA

WELCOME

You Are the Heart of the Room

Welcome to the bar at Old Friend. On most nights, the bar is the first thing a guest sees and the last place they linger. It is where a solo diner feels at home, where a couple waits for their table without minding the wait, and where a stranger becomes a regular and a regular becomes a friend. Your job is bigger than building drinks. Your job is to make every person who sits down feel like an old friend.

That means two things at once, always: the craft has to be right, and the welcome has to be warm. A perfect drink served coldly is a failure here. A warm greeting with a sloppy pour is a failure too. We hold both, every time, on the busiest Saturday and the quietest Tuesday. This handbook is how — the philosophy, the program, the specs, and the standards that make our bar feel like nowhere else on the Main Line.

“We are not in the drinks business. We are in the hospitality business — and drinks are how we say welcome.”

Read this once cover to cover, then keep it close. Learn the specs cold. Learn the wine list. And learn the room — because the best thing you will ever pour is attention.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The Old Friend Way

Everything at Old Friend runs on intention. Chef Sam cooks over fire with restraint and purpose, and the bar follows the same ethos: a tight, considered program executed consistently, every single time. We would rather do a short list flawlessly than a long list unevenly. Four ideas guide everything you do behind the bar.

- **Hospitality first.** Read the guest before you read the order. Eye contact, a genuine greeting, and a glass of water buy you the time to make the drink right.
- **Consistency is the craft.** The tenth Negroni of the night is as good as the first. Specs exist so every guest gets the same drink no matter who is behind the bar.
- **Restraint over flash.** Clean technique, good ice, fresh garnish. We are not chasing tricks; we are chasing the right drink, balanced and honest.
- **One team.** The bar, the floor, and the kitchen are one room. Communicate constantly, cover each other, and never let a teammate drown.

THE PROGRAM

What We Pour

Our beverage program is built like our wine list: small, deliberate, and seasonal. The cocktail menu is ten house drinks that rotate with what Chef Sam is cooking and what is good right now. Spirits are chosen to be versatile and honest, not to fill a back bar with trophies. The wine list follows the house “triangle” — a Base, a Mid-Range, and an Apex tier in both reds and whites, each anchored by a West Coast domestic our Main Line guests trust, alongside the Old World classics.

You do not need to memorize a thousand bottles. You need to know our list cold — what each pour tastes like, what it costs, and what to suggest when a guest says “surprise me.” When in doubt, sell the thing you love and can describe in one honest sentence.

“A short list, done perfectly, is more impressive than a long one done unevenly.”

The Cocktail Program

Ten house cocktails, built around five base spirits — gin, vodka, whiskey, tequila, and mezcal. There is a quiet thread of smoke running through the menu — a torched orange peel here, a whisper of mezcal there, a charred lime, a pinch of ancho — because Chef Sam cooks over fire and our bar should taste like it belongs in the same room. The key word is *whisper*. Smoke is a seasoning, not the dish. Most of these drinks are bright and balanced; the smoke is there to make a guest lean in, not cough.

Build every drink to spec, with a jigger, every time. The specs below are the law of this bar. If a guest wants it adjusted, make it their way and note it — but the menu drink is the menu drink.

- Measurements are in ounces (oz). Use a jigger — always.
- “Stir” drinks are spirit-forward and clear; “shake” drinks have citrus or egg and need aeration.
- Fresh juice only. Batch only what we batch, and label and date it.
- Express citrus peels over the glass to release the oils, then garnish.

1 • The Conservatory **GIN**

Bright, green, and garden-fresh — our most refreshing pour and a perfect opener. No smoke; this one is all light.

BUILD

- 2 oz gin
- 0.75 oz fresh lime
- 0.5 oz simple syrup
- 3 cucumber wheels
- 4 basil leaves
- Soda water to top

Method. Gently muddle cucumber and basil; add gin, lime, simple; shake; strain over fresh ice; top with soda.

Glass & ice. Highball • fresh ice.

Garnish. Basil sprig and a cucumber wheel.

Your bright anchor — suggest it to the guest who says “nothing too strong.”

2 • Smoke Ring **GIN**

A crisp gin aperitivo with a single ring of smoke from a torched orange peel. Elegant, low-smoke, conversation-starting.

BUILD

- 1.5 oz gin
- 0.75 oz Cocchi Americano (or Lillet Blanc)
- 0.25 oz mezcal
- 0.5 oz fresh grapefruit
- 0.25 oz simple syrup

Method. Stir with ice until cold; strain.

Glass & ice. Coupe · up.

Garnish. Express a smoked-orange peel over the glass, lightly torch, drop in.

The mezcal and torched peel give a whisper of smoke over a clean gin base.

3 • Cold Open **VODKA**

A featherlight vodka spritz to start the night — citrus, elderflower, and bubbles. Clean and zero smoke.

BUILD

- 1.5 oz vodka
- 0.75 oz fresh lemon
- 0.5 oz elderflower liqueur
- 2 cucumber wheels
- Prosecco to top

Method. Shake vodka, lemon, elderflower with ice; strain into a chilled flute or coupe; top with prosecco.

Glass & ice. Flute or coupe · up.

Garnish. Lemon twist.

Crushable and crowd-pleasing — great for a celebration or a first round.

4 • Velvet Ember **VODKA**

Our after-dinner espresso martini, with a smoked-salt-and-cocoa rim that smolders under the coffee.

BUILD

- 1.5 oz vodka
- 0.75 oz fresh espresso (or cold brew)
- 0.5 oz coffee liqueur
- 0.25 oz demerara syrup

Method. Shake hard with ice until frothy; fine-strain.

Glass & ice. Coupe · up; half-rim with smoked salt + cocoa.

Garnish. Three coffee beans.

The smoked salt is the “ember” — subtle, savory, and the reason this beats a standard espresso martini.

5 • Old Flame **WHISKEY**

Our Old Fashioned, kissed by fire — a torched smoked-orange peel over rye and demerara. The smoky classic of the menu.

BUILD

- 2 oz rye (or bourbon)
- 0.25 oz demerara syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura
- 1 dash smoked-orange bitters

Method. Stir with ice until cold; strain over a large cube.

Glass & ice. Rocks · one big cube.

Garnish. Express and lightly torch an orange peel over the glass.

Lean the smoke here a touch more — guests order this one because of the char.

6 • Lancaster Sour **WHISKEY**

A New York Sour grown up on the Main Line — rye and maple under a float of our red. A nod to the wine list. No smoke.

BUILD

- 2 oz rye
- 0.75 oz fresh lemon
- 0.5 oz maple syrup
- 0.5 oz egg white
- 0.5 oz dry red wine (float)

Method. Dry-shake (no ice), then shake with ice; strain into a coupe; gently float the red wine over the back of a spoon.

Glass & ice. Coupe · up.

Garnish. A few drops of Angostura on the foam.

Float a Base-tier red from the cellar · it ties the bar to the wine list.

7 • Burnt Lime **TEQUILA**

A margarita with a tan — charred lime and a smoked-salt rim over bright blanco. Smoky, savory, dangerously easy.

BUILD

- 2 oz blanco tequila
- 1 oz fresh lime
- 0.5 oz agave
- 0.25 oz orange liqueur
- 2 slices charred jalapeño (optional, for heat)

Method. Shake with ice; strain over fresh ice.

Glass & ice. Rocks · fresh ice; half-rim with smoked salt + Tajín.

Garnish. Charred lime wheel.

Char the lime on the Jospir at family meal — the smoke comes from the garnish, not the glass.

8 • The Neighbor **TEQUILA**

Our patio paloma-spritz — reposado, Aperol, and grapefruit with a mezcal float drifting on top. Bright with a smoky finish.

BUILD

- 1.5 oz reposado tequila
- 0.5 oz Aperol
- 0.5 oz fresh lime
- 2 oz grapefruit soda
- 0.25 oz mezcal (float)

Method. Build over ice in a highball; stir gently; float the mezcal on top.

Glass & ice. Highball · fresh ice.

Garnish. Grapefruit twist.

The mezcal floats so the smoke hits the nose first, then fades — easygoing and sessionable.

9 • Smoke Signal **MEZCAL**

Tropical and smoldering — mezcal with pineapple, lime, and a pinch of ancho. The smoke and fruit play off the fire menu.

BUILD

- 1.5 oz mezcal
- 1 oz fresh pineapple
- 0.5 oz fresh lime
- 0.5 oz agave
- Pinch of ground ancho chili

Method. Shake with ice; strain over fresh ice.

Glass & ice. Rocks · fresh ice.

Garnish. Dehydrated pineapple and a dusting of chili salt.

The crowd-pleasing way into mezcal for the smoke-curious guest.

10 • Famous Last Words **MEZCAL**

Our closer: the Last Word, rebuilt on mezcal. Equal parts, electric green, and quietly smoky — the drink we send you home on.

BUILD

- 0.75 oz mezcal
- 0.75 oz green Chartreuse
- 0.75 oz Luxardo maraschino
- 0.75 oz fresh lime

Method. Shake with ice; fine-strain.

Glass & ice. Coupe · up.

Garnish. A brandied cherry.

Equal-parts and unforgettable — the mezcal turns a classic into our signature last word of the night.

THE SIGNATURE MOVE

Smoked Orange & Working With Fire

Smoke is our thread, so do it well and do it cleanly. The house technique is the smoked-orange peel: cut a wide swath of orange, express the oils skin-side toward the glass, pass it briefly through the flame of a torch or a wooden match until the oils catch and release a thread of smoke, then drop or perch it. Done right it perfumes the drink; done wrong it tastes like an ashtray. Keep it brief — a second or two, not a bonfire.

- Less is more. If a guest can smell smoke from a foot away, you used too much.
- Char garnishes (lime, jalapeño, pineapple) at family meal on the Josper and store them dry.
- Smoked salt and smoked bitters carry smoke without theatrics — reach for them first.
- Never leave a torch lit or unattended. Fire is a tool, not a trick.

KNOW YOUR BOTTLES

Spirits, Wine & Beer

Be able to speak simply and confidently about every category we carry. A guest should never feel talked down to or oversold. Learn the back bar in your first week and taste everything you are allowed to.

- **Cocktails.** Know the spec, build, glass, and garnish for all ten house drinks, plus the classics any good bar makes on request — Martini, Negroni, Old Fashioned, Manhattan, Margarita, Daiquiri, Sour.
- **Wine.** Learn the triangle: 16 reds and 16 whites across Base, Mid-Range, and Apex, plus sparkling, a dessert pour, and an orange/skin-contact wine. Know the by-the-glass pours and one good upsell in each tier.
- **Beer.** Keep the short draft and bottle list current; know what is local and what pairs with the fire.
- **Zero-proof.** Treat the spirit-free guest with the same care — a thoughtful no/low drink is hospitality, not an afterthought.

SERVICE & PACE

Reading the Room

A great bartender runs the bar like a conductor — aware of every seat at once. Greet a new guest within thirty seconds, even if it is only a nod and “I’ll be right with you.” Open a tab clearly, repeat orders back, and never let a guest sit with an empty glass and no acknowledgment. The service well (the floor’s drinks) is your guest too — keep those tickets moving alongside the people in front of you.

- Acknowledge every guest on arrival; water down within the first minute.
- Fire food orders promptly and check allergies before you ring.
- Balance bar guests and service tickets — neither waits.
- Watch pace and intake; a well-timed glass of water is the mark of a pro.
- Hand off cleanly at shift change: open tabs, 86s, and low-stock notes.

CRAFT & CONSISTENCY

How We Build a Drink

Specs are not suggestions. Use a jigger. Use the right ice for the right drink. Shake with intention, stir what should be stirred, and taste your batches before service. Fresh juice, fresh garnish, clean glassware — every time, no shortcuts when it gets busy.

- Measure every pour; free-pouring is for emergencies, not standards.
- Big clear cubes for spirit-forward drinks; fresh ice for every build; never reuse ice.
- Garnish is the first taste — express the citrus, trim the herb, keep it pristine.
- Batch what we batch to spec, label and date it, and rotate first-in-first-out.
- If a drink is not right, dump it and rebuild. The guest gets the right one.

SETUP TO WIN

Speed & Mise en Place

Speed comes from setup, not from rushing. A well-built station — stocked wells, cut garnish, full ice, polished glassware, batched mixes — lets you stay calm and gracious when the room fills. Build your bar before the doors open so service feels effortless, and reset it through the night so you are never caught empty.

Keep par. The point of par levels is that you never run out mid-rush and never over-order. If you pull the last bottle of anything, write it down and tell the manager. Stock the bar for the night you hope for, not the night you expect.

RESPONSIBLE SERVICE

Serving With Care

Serving alcohol is a responsibility we take seriously, and a legal one in Pennsylvania. Every bartender must hold current RAMP (Responsible Alcohol Management Program) certification. We card anyone who looks under 30, no exceptions, and we keep guests safe — that is part of hospitality, not opposed to it.

- Check ID for anyone who could be under 30; know a real ID from a fake.
- Pace service, offer water and food, and never over-serve.
- You may refuse service — do it calmly, kindly, and with a manager's support.
- Never serve a visibly intoxicated guest; help arrange a ride if needed.
- When in doubt, slow down and get a manager. No sale is worth a guest's safety.

IN THE WEEDS

Guests You'll Meet

Hospitality is mostly reading people. A few you will see every shift, and how we take care of them:

- **The regular.** Remember their drink and their name. The second visit should feel like a homecoming.
- **The “surprise me.”** Ask two quick questions (spirit and bright-vs-spirit-forward), then make something you love. Confidence sells.
- **The waiting-for-a-table guest.** They are the host’s guest and yours. Make the wait the best part of their night.
- **The celebration.** Notice it, acknowledge it, and tell a manager — a small gesture becomes the story they tell.
- **The one who’s had enough.** Kindly, quietly, with water and a manager. Dignity always.

THE LANGUAGE

Bar Glossary

- **86** — out of stock; mark it on the 86 board so the floor knows.
- **Build** — make a drink directly in the serving glass.
- **Dry shake** — shake without ice (for egg-white drinks) before shaking with ice.
- **Express** — squeeze a citrus peel over the drink to release its oils.
- **Mise en place** — everything in its place; your pre-shift setup.
- **Neat / Up / Rocks** — no ice / chilled and strained / over ice.
- **Service well** — drinks ordered by the floor for seated guests.

EACH OTHER

How We Treat Each Other

We take care of each other the way we take care of guests. Communicate clearly, ask for help before you are buried, and offer it before you are asked. Share knowledge — a tasting note, a faster build, a save during a rush. Respect the floor and the kitchen; they are the reason your guests are happy. Grow here: bring us a cocktail idea, a wine you love, a better way to do something. Great bars are built by bartenders who care about every guest and every detail, night after night.

“Make the drink right. Make the welcome warm. Take care of each other. That’s the whole job.”

Old Friend · Bartender Handbook · Edition 1 · 2026. A living document — if something here can be better, tell a manager.