

Beyond the cart: 12 sexy home bar designs

ASK THE EXPERT HOME IMPROVEMENT STYLE



Analysts at home design hub Houzz found that searches for home bars were up 277 percent.. *Lam Photography (left); Jared Kuzia (right)*

Marni Elyse Katz - Globe Correspondent

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"In 2021, the home bar has come out of the closet!" Heather Vaughan of **Heather Vaughan Design** (www.heathervaughandesign.com) proclaims. Instead of tucking bars behind closed doors, clients want them out in the open, often with boutique hotel-type vibes.

Designers are installing speakeasies and sports bars in basements, morphing unused sunrooms into grownup getaways, and outfitting empty rooms over the garage with high-top tables and ice makers. Andra Birkerts of **Andra Birkerts Design** (www.andrabdesign.com) refers to such spaces as "lures" because they pull people into more remote parts of the house. "It gives people a cool place to go and provides a location for alternative interactions, like sitting at the bar," she said.

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Home bars aren't always out-of-the-way. Nikki Dalrymple of **Acquire** (www.acquireboutique.com) is re-imagining formal living rooms in suburban homes as cocktail lounges. Since these rooms are usually adjacent to the dining room, the flow makes sense, she said.

In a condo at Millennium Tower in Boston, Meghan Shadrick of **Meghan Shadrick Interiors** (www.meghanshadrick.com) turned the second bedroom into a whiskey bar/TV lounge. "They had a massive collection of over 150 whiskey bottles and about the same in wine," the designer said. "It's a spot where they can sip a glass and watch a sports game."

For Nina Seed of **Nina Seed Interiors**, (www.ninaseedinteriors.com) cocktail rooms are such a regular ask that her team worked up a rendering for a concept and layout that she can show clients as a jumping-off point. "Of course, we make each cocktail room unique to the client and their budget," she said.

It's not just happening in New England. Analysts at home design hub [Houzz](#) compared searches on the site from April to June of 2021 with the same time last year and found that [searches for home bars were up 277 percent](#). Searches for art studios were up 875 percent, which should make for some pretty interesting artwork in 2022.

New England designers shared 12 of their favorite home bars and cocktail lounge spaces:



—Michael J. Lee

When Virginia DesRoches's sister and her fiancé built a home in Acushnet, an oversize rec room — a place where immediate and extended family could hang out, play pool, watch sports and movies, and grab a drink — was a must. **Ironwood Studio's** principal designer went dark and moody to evoke a smoky, masculine vibe and a whole new experience. "The rest of the house is all white," DesRoches said. "There's a totally different mood when you walk into this room."

■ www.ironwoodstudio.co



—Sabrina Cole Quinn

What to include in a 2,000-square foot basement renovation in Newton? If you're John Bradfield's clients, two dads with a pair of toddlers, the answer is a 12-seat, tiered movie theater with a full bar at the rear. Bradfield outfitted the bar with freezer and beverage drawers, an ice maker, and storage for movie snacks. Plus, there's additional seating for five at the counter. "Since the pandemic hit, clients have been upgrading the entertainment areas in their homes," the **Bradfield Interior Design** principal said. "I am currently working on a speakeasy lounge."

■ www.bradfieldid.com



—Kyle J. Caldwell

“With our ever-changing world, my clients are searching for ways to bring entertainment back to their homes,” said Kellie Burke, principal of **Kellie Burke Interiors**. In response, Burke has been turning “underutilized spaces that we fill with nonsensical furnishings” into adult rooms with “bougie atmospheres.” For clients in West Hartford, she transformed a sunroom filled with toys and UPS packages into a glamorous lounge. “My clients actually dress up as if they are going out on the town, to entertain in their own home.”

■ www.kellieburke.com



. —Stephen Sheffield

Sheffield Interiors founder Alison Sheffield adores the butler's pantry in her Cohasset home. During the pandemic, she enhanced the design, turning it into a full-on bar and the focal point of her kitchen. On March 9, 2020, with no clue about what was to come, the designer and her photographer husband, Stephen Sheffield, kicked off #sheffieldcocktailhour on her Instagram Stories. They've been concocting a classic cocktail from their home bar every Friday night since. "Initially it was meant to be a way to demonstrate how easy it is to make really great cocktails at home," Alison said. "Then the pandemic hit, and it blossomed into a therapeutic way to entertain ourselves during some really dark days." So far, they've shared 93 different recipes!

▪ www.sheffieldinteriors.com and www.instagram.com/sheffield_interiors



. —wearefreebird.com

What to do when your house has small rooms, but you want to throw a 40th birthday blowout? A family of five in Andover looked to designer **Gina Baran** to turn a cluttered rec room above the garage into a multifunctional space where the adults could entertain and the family could watch movies and play games together. On one side, Baran set up a sectional with a drop-down projection screen. On the other, there's a pool table, a high-top table, and a built-in bar. "The wife loves geometrics, so we used encaustic cement hexagon tiles on the front of the bar and herringbone wallpaper behind it," Baran said.

▪ www.ginabaran.com



. —Michael J. Lee

When Clare Wheadon's clients purchased their dream home in Marblehead at the beginning of last year, she turned the formal living room into a grown-ups-only space with a bar stocked with their collection of bourbons, rums, and liqueurs. "It was a retreat during a time when the kids were home much, much more than usual," said the principal of **Clare Wheadon Interiors**. Wheadon tucked the built-in bar, which she painted a glossy Farrow & Ball "Stone Blue" and backed with Cole & Son "Nuvolette" wallpaper into a cozy corner. "The room has a beautiful view of the ever-changing sea and nearby small islands," Wheadon said. "It's the perfect place for a drink!"

▪ www.clarewheadoninteriors.com



. —Lam Photography

Before Ellen Piccolo worked her magic on the sunroom of her West Hartford Colonial, it was a playroom. As the kids aged, she wanted to transition them to the basement and reclaim this room for grown-up time. So the designer, who was an associate at **Camden Grace Interiors**, installed black-and-white marble floors and painted the ceiling with a high-gloss finish that sparkles in the evening. "They listen to the Victrola record player and entertain small groups of friends over cocktails," Jeanne Barber, the firm's founder said. "The kids play happily in the basement."

▪ www.camden-grace.com



. —Joyelle West Photography

Inspired by the conventions he attends in Las Vegas, Vivian Robins's client suggested turning the unfinished space over the garage of his Concord home into a glam lounge where he and his wife could entertain. So the founder of **Vivian Robins Design** got to work. The result is a moody space with a fireplace and sofa on one side and a bar, high-top table, and four leather club chairs on the other. A crystal chandelier and a sparkly three-dimensional glass tile backsplash sparkle against the wall treatment hand-painted by decorative painter Pauline Curtiss of [Patina Designs](#). "Everyone loves the sexy, bar loft that came into play," Robins said. "When they have parties, nobody wants to leave."

▪ www.vivianrobinsdesign.com



Not every bar needs to be built-in. Leah Hook and Sonia Brady, the design duo behind **Gray Oak Studio**, added a freestanding, fluted bar and wall-hung shelves to the open concept living space of their client's Lynnfield home. "We wanted it to feel cohesive, like a natural part of the great room rather than an island," Hook said. "The end result is a mini cocktail scene that bridges the dining room and living room, bringing personality and color into the coastal scheme."

▪ www.grayoakstudio.com



. —Joseph Keller

Christine Tuttle was discussing finishing the basement of her clients' Lexington home when the pandemic hit. "They mentioned getting a Foosball table, and suddenly the husband said, 'Let's put a wet bar in the corner,'" the owner of **Christine Tuttle Design** recalled. In order to fit four stools on the front and two on the end without impeding the flow from the stairs to the sofa, Tuttle designed the bar in a curved silhouette. Then she wrapped it in wood tambour paneling painted in Farrow & Ball "[Hague Blue](#)" for a classic New England feel. The hammered metal sink adds style on the flip side. The couple hangs out at the bar after dinner with a different, fun cocktail each week. "It's like a night out on the town," the designer said.

▪ www.christinetuttle.com



. —Sarah M. Winchester

Rather than preserve the cherry coffered ceiling in the library of this Wellesley home, Kim Tosi painted it Farrow & Ball “[Stiffkey Blue](#)” with a high-gloss finish. “When we initially walked through, the husband said: ‘I don’t need an office. Let’s make it into a bar,’” the **Gather Home** principal recalled. In addition to the new color, which was inspired by a boutique hotel in Charlottesville, Va., she removed the French doors that opened

to the living room and widened the opening for an easy flow between the spaces. Nantucket-based cabinetmaker Jeremy Trottier crafted the walnut bar. "During COVID, their pod was regularly at the bar," Tosi said. "It's their safe place."

▪ www.gatherhomedesign.com



. —Jared Kuzia

Linda Weisberg, founder of **LWInteriors**, created this bar nook off the dining room of a 1790 Federal farmhouse in Sudbury. The owners, who produce **Goodnow Farms Chocolate** in a barn on their property, wanted a special place where they could easily mix cocktails for themselves and friends. Weisberg lined the back wall with **Farrow & Ball "Rosslyn" wallpaper** and did the ceiling in gold leaf. The finishing touch? An original photograph of Abraham Lincoln that the designer found on eBay. "The husband loves Abe Lincoln; his wife gave it to him as a birthday present," she said.

▪ www.lwinteriors.com

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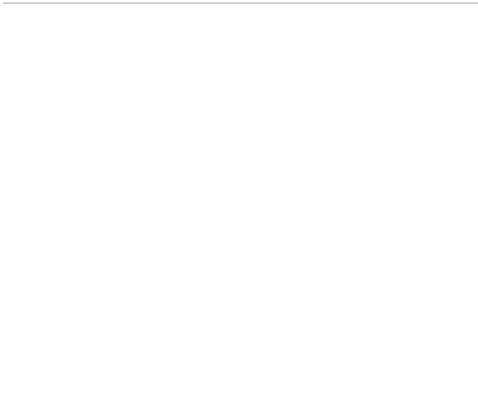


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