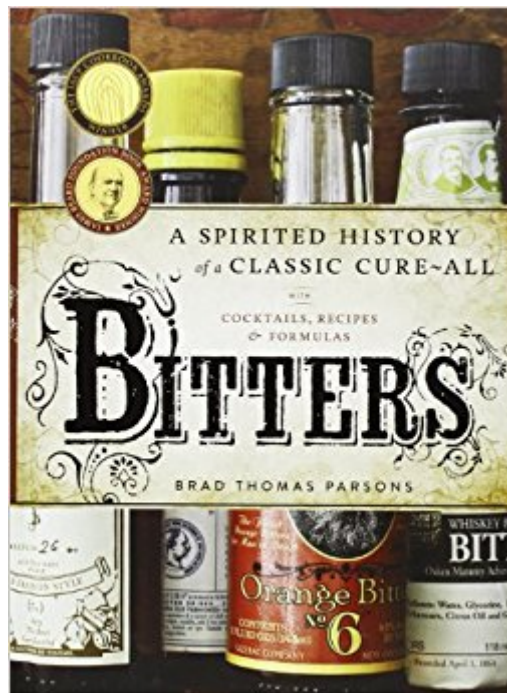




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# Bitters: A Spirited History Of A Classic Cure-All, With Cocktails, Recipes, And Formulas



## Synopsis

Gone are the days when a lonely bottle of Angostura bitters held court behind the bar. A cocktail renaissance has swept across the country, inspiring in bartenders and their thirsty patrons a new fascination with the ingredients, techniques, and traditions that make the American cocktail so special. And few ingredients have as rich a history or serve as fundamental a role in our beverage heritage as bitters. ã ã Author and bitters enthusiast Brad Thomas Parsons traces the history of the world's most storied elixir, from its earliest "snake oil" days to its near evaporation after Prohibition to its ascension as a beloved (and at times obsessed-over) ingredient on the contemporary bar scene. Parsons writes from the front lines of the bitters boom, where he has access to the best and boldest new brands and flavors, the most innovative artisanal producers, and insider knowledge of the bitters-making process. ã ã Whether you're a professional looking to take your game to the next level or just a DIY-type interested in homemade potables, *Bitters* has a dozen recipes for customized blends--ranging from Apple to Coffee-Pecan to Root Beer bitters--as well as tips on sourcing ingredients and step-by-step instructions fit for amateur and seasoned food crafters alike. ã ã Also featured are more than seventy cocktail recipes that showcase bitters' diversity and versatility: classics like the Manhattan (if you ever get one without bitters, send it back), old-guard favorites like the Martinez, contemporary drinks from Parsons' own repertoire like the Shady Lane, plus one-of-a-kind libations from the country's most pioneering bartenders. Last but not least, there is a full chapter on cooking with bitters, with a dozen recipes for sweet and savory bitters-infused dishes. ã ã Part recipe book, part project guide, part barman's manifesto, *Bitters* is a celebration of good cocktails made well, and of the once-forgotten but blessedly rediscovered virtues of bitters.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Ten Speed Press; 1 edition (November 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1580083595

ISBN-13: 978-1580083591

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 1.3 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 184 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #19,600 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in ã ã Books > Cookbooks,

Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Cocktails & Mixed Drinks #19 in [Books > Cookbooks](#),  
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## Customer Reviews

**Featured Recipes from Bitters**

**The Horse's Neck** Called "the great what-is-it of the Highball tribe" by David A. Embury in *The Fine Art of Mixing Drinks*, the Horse's Neck started as a nonalcoholic drink in the 1890s, but the addition of whiskey, bourbon, rye, brandy, scotch, or even gin brought a spirited kick to this refreshing highball. The drink, per Embury, "degenerated" into a nonalcoholic beverage once again during Prohibition. Bourbon and ginger ale is one of my favorite marriages of spirit and mixer, so that is recommended here. The garnish is achieved by positioning one continuous spiral of zest from a whole lemon so that it is flapping over the glass's edge, invoking the silhouette of a horse's mane. Personally, the lemon corkscrew puts me in the mind of a pig's tail, but I suppose the Pig's Tail isn't as elegant a name as the Horse's Neck. Makes 1 drink

1 lemon 2 ounces bourbon 3 dashes Angostura bitters Ginger ale

Carefully peel the zest from the lemon in one continuous spiral with a channel knife. Coil the zest around a barspoon or chopstick to encourage a bouncy spiral. Place the lemon zest in the bottom of a chilled highball glass, hanging the end of the coiled garnish over the side of the glass. Fill the glass with ice. Add the bourbon and bitters and top off with ginger ale.

**The Autumn Sweater** We could slip away Wouldn't that be better? The bittersweet lyrics of "Autumn Sweater," from Yo La Tengo's 1997 album, *I Can Hear the Heart Beating As One*, serve as the source material for this melancholy change-of-season shoegazer. Serve it over a large block of ice, or over an ice sphere--even better to evoke a fat harvest moon hanging in the nighttime sky. Made in Sicily since 1868, Averna is a syrupy, bitter herbal liqueur. It isn't overpowering, though, and is a great gateway amaro if you're interested in exploring potable bitters. Amaro Nonino is another mild Italian digestif whose caramel color and warm, spicy burnt orange notes round out the full fall flavors here. Wrap yourself in an Autumn Sweater and embrace what the season has in store for you. Makes 1 drink

1 ounce rye 1/2 ounce Averna 1/2 ounce Amaro Nonino 1/2 ounce maple syrup 1 dash Urban Moonshine maple bitters 1 dash orange bitters

**Garnish:** thick clove-studded strip of orange zest

Combine all the ingredients except the garnish in a mixing glass filled with ice and stir until chilled. Add a large sphere of ice to a chilled double old-fashioned and strain the drink into the glass. For the garnish, use a paring knife to slice a thick strip of zest from an orange. Twist it over the drink to release the essential oils and rub along the rim of the glass. Stud the orange zest with two whole

cloves and drape it over the ice sphere. **Champagne Cocktail** Is there anything more festive than hearing the soft pop of a cork coming out of a bottle of Champagne? That's an aural cue for celebration in my book, and while Champagne is wonderful on its own, adding a sugary, bitters-soaked kiss to the equation elevates the experience tenfold. Four to six dashes of bitters should do the trick, but you really want to soak the sugar cube, which, once the Champagne is introduced, will leave a fizzy stream of bitters pushing up through the glass. **Makes 1 drink** 1 sugar cube 4 to 6 dashes Angostura or other aromatic bitters Chilled champagne Garnish: lemon twist Place the sugar cube on the bottom of a champagne flute or coupe glass. Douse the sugar cube with the bitters and fill the glass with champagne. Garnish with the lemon twist.   

Winner, James Beard Awards 2012- Beverage Category    Winner, IACP Awards 2012- Wine, Beer or Spirits Category  
“Finally, here is an entire book devoted to the history, culture, and uses of the herbal elixir.”  
•BonAppetit.com "Best Cookbooks of 2011"  
“Gorgeous and fascinating”  
| highly recommend for those interested in spirits.  
• Michael Ruhlman, 12/2/11  
“Engaging”  
| gorgeous  
| The book practically begs for a dark leather chair, a roaring fireplace, and a Manhattan  
| a nearly ideal gift.  
• Serious Drinks, 12/1/11  
“Stylish, engaging, geek-attack-inducing”  
| The beautiful art in Bitters invites readers to touch, open and browse, and the prose is as intelligent as the photography is beautiful. Whether it's found on the coffee table, in the kitchen or behind the bar, this book incites readers to explore, create and share.  
• Shelf Awareness, 11/22/11  
“This is graduate-level stuff and would be a welcome addition to any cocktail geek's library.”  
• Wall Street Journal, 11/19/11  
“Brad Thomas Parsons tracks the bitters boom in his new book  
Bitters, and manages to elevate herbs to an art form.”  
• Newsweek, 11/14/11  
“Fascinating”  
| Parsons offer[s] techniques for making bitters at home as well as a great collection of unique cocktail recipes.  
• The Washington Post, 11/8/11  
“The literary apotheosis of the bizarre and undeniably beautiful artisanal and historic cocktail trend.”  
• The Atlantic, 11/4/11  
“Cocktails are very much in again and bitters are the belle of the ball. We are totally ready to geek out with this one.”  
• The Huffington Post, 8/25/11  
“Brad has not only written the definitive volume on bitters, but also proven himself a bartender of the highest order: an inspired mixologist and a gifted storyteller whose generous, engaging voice makes you want to order round after round.”  
• Matt Lee and Ted Lee, authors of The Lee Bros.

Simple Fresh Southern

“Bitters turns a potentially esoteric topic into a breezy read, packed with recipes for the bar and kitchen that we will certainly be adding to our repertoire. Brad’s witty, generous storytelling and excellent historical research, paired with the handsome visuals, set this book apart.”

•Frank Castronovo and Frank Falcinelli, authors of The Frankies Spuntino Kitchen Companion & Cooking Manual and chef/owners of Frankies Spuntino and Prime Meats

“I love bitters! Brad’s book is a must-have for all booze nerds. The history is fascinating and the recipes are awesome.”

•David Chang, chef/owner of Momofuku

“Thanks to Brad Thomas Parsons’s inquisitive detective work, readers can discover how cocktail bitters rose from the ashes of Prohibition to become an indispensable ingredient for the country’s top mixologists.”

•Jim Meehan, managing partner at PDT and author of The PDT Cocktail Book

“Similar to the mysterious and storied elixir it documents, Bitters is bright, refreshing, complex, and essential. It will also cure your gout. Any fan of cocktails will desire it, but so will any fan of fascinating history, good writing, or gentian root.”

•John Hodgman, author of That Is All

Must read for anyone who is interested in bitters. Probably quite boring if you are not. I love this book. Likewise, if you’re interested in making your own bitters this is a good start.

There has long been a gap in every mixologist’s library; but who would be bold enough and nerdy enough to devote a book to the art of creating the sometimes delicate, sometimes potent seasonings that allow a true artist to give her drinks a unique, personal flair? We have the answer in this book. The author was extremely smart to combine bitters recipes alongside cocktails and even food dishes that are made all the more special with the addition of bitters. I only wish that there was at least one cocktail associated with each unique bitters the author takes great care to teach. Still, one can experiment and find the right applications on their own. This book is a tremendous resource for those of us ready to take our mixing to the next level, and hopefully elevate the art as a whole. I have no doubt this book will be in mixologists’ libraries for 50 years, and that many updated editions are in its future.

I thoroughly enjoyed this little book. Still review it from time to time. In addition to the brief history, the segment on making your own provides additional understanding. It was, however, the cocktail recipes that added another layer of appreciation. Taking what most bars or people use as a

standard recipe for a good drink, and adding one or more bitters adds a layer of complexity for the nose and taste buds, and transforms the drink into an exceptional experience. I now keep a wide range of bitters at the house.

This is a fantastic book if for no other reason than it appears to be the only game in town when it comes to really diving into bitters. I took one star off because some of the recipes could stand to be clearer. For example, in one recipe, the author explains that he likes using grated lime zest rather than thin strips because it brings the flavor out better. Then the recipe calls for zest cut into strips as well as grated zest. This is not the only instance where directions are unclear. If there were a little more explanation on parts like that, it would be a glowing 5-star.

If you are interested in bitters this is the most comprehensive book I know of. It has great cocktail recipes and some food recipes as well. Should be on every mixologists bookshelf.

The best part of this book isn't the knowledge it imparts (though there is so much to be learned), it's the ability the book has to inspire a deep thirst in the reader. I only had to get 10 pages in before I could sense the impending desire to create and craft my own concoctions including bitters from the chapters I was browsing. Full of excellent history and a variety of recipes, this book deserves a solid reading and many return visits.

Brad Thomas Parsons is a wonderful writer. In "Bitters," he tackles a subject that is generally overlooked and seemingly mundane, and injects life, charisma and celebrity into the bar's most modest all-star. The all-encompassing volume focuses on the rise of bitters and its use before Prohibition, its quick death and its slow return; homeopathic use; historical legal standing; current market share; recipes; complimenting products (i.e. simple syrups); and production guides. With a deft and entertaining writing style, BTP essentially provides the industry with a comprehensive textbook that reads like a novel. Not only that, but its provided me a few more meet-and-greets and watering holes to add to my bucket list. "A Spirited History" indeed.

I love the resurgence of creative cocktail activity in cities and towns all over the world. Brad's book gives the reader an excellent historical account of the origins of bitters, their early uses, applications to cocktails, and some recipes for how to make your own bitters at home. I read it on a recent overseas trip and I found the historical information fascinating. Brad's recipes are easy to follow and

give the reader the chance to experiment at home. I think this is a perfect book for your home bar or for anyone looking to learn more about such a critical component, essential to most cocktails.

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