

Bricks & Mortar

INTERIORS

You may call it a drinks trolley, but to interior designers and decor gurus it is a “bar cart” — this summer’s hottest home accessory. Its appeal lies in how it is an easy-access serving station and a striking design feature.

“With more people opting for a big night in over a big night out, the bar cart has experienced a revival,” says Nadia McCowan Hill, wayfair.co.uk’s style adviser. Searches on the website for bar and drinks trolleys are up by 540 per cent year-on-year. Television shows such as *Come Dine With Me* have helped to boost enthusiasm for dinner parties. The result? Home bars and cocktail spaces worthy of James Bond.

Brian Woulfe, the founder of Designed by Woulfe, a luxury interior design studio, says: “Clients want their guests to feel welcome, and what better way than to have a space to gather around while you make them a drink?”

According to Woulfe, the “bar concept” is being applied in inventive ways throughout the home, from small drinks trolleys in bathroom suites (“so the client can prepare a gin and tonic as they relax”) to using side tables in snug rooms to display their favourite whiskies. It is also seeping into bespoke kitchens — one option is to have a sunken champagne bath built into the kitchen island.

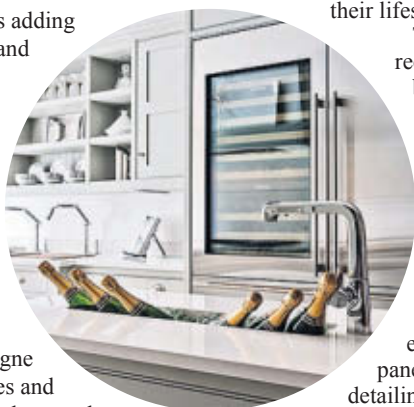
Bar cart chic

Martin Waller, the founder of Andrew Martin, a design brand, says: “In terms of design, a bar cart is a product you can play with, taking influence from the cocktail days of the Roaring Twenties or the bachelor-style allure of the Fifties and Sixties. Its purpose is to enable a party atmosphere. Think of it as a stylised piece of room jewellery rather than a practical go-to.”

McCowan Hill says adding statement glassware and cocktail shakers. “A vintage glass filled with retro paper straws, a vase of fresh blooms and a few candles will give your cart a beautifully polished finish.”

The best carts are stocked with champagne flutes, highball glasses and martini glasses. “It’s also worth investing in an ice bucket and tongs,” says McCowan Hill. If you prefer to have a bar cabinet rather than a bar cart — to make more of a show of your spirits and glassware — try to make it blend with your home’s decor.

Maurizio Pellizzoni, a London-based interior designer, says: “The best way to recreate a bar at home is to allocate a space, even if it’s just a small corner of a cabinet. Add layers with different sizes and shapes of bottles. The bar area should be contained and house essential tools such as a decanter.”



The bar in a penthouse in the Nova Building development in Victoria, southwest London, commissioned by the design studio Bowler James Brindley

The drinks trolley is back — as a ‘bar cart’

A new kind of art

Increasingly the clients of luxury interior designers are requesting home bars and making specific requests for their cocktail space. Charu Gandhi, the founder of Elicyon, an interior design studio, says that some of her clients “describe in detail exactly how they mix their gin and tonic and the spicy nibbles they like from Harrods” so that Elicyon can commission pieces to suit their lifestyles.

The design studio recently completed a bespoke whisky cabinet for an apartment in Belgravia, west London, that is so ornate it is almost a piece of art. Gandhi says: “The foldable artisan doors feature exquisite burgundy panels with gold leaf detailing. These doors open to present a tailored interior that houses the accoutrements required for preparing the perfect whisky.”

According to Ed Ng, a co-founder of AB Concept, a Hong Kong-based design company, more people are veering away from traditional high-top bars and opting for stand-alone pieces. “Although the traditional bar is typically what people envision, it doesn’t need to be against the wall. It can be a fun, creative piece that has more of an artistic edge,” he says. He gives the quirky example of the *Thirsty Hippo*, a bar sculpted in bronze and in the shape of a hippo, designed by François-Xavier Lalanne.



A bespoke whisky cabinet in a Belgravia apartment (elicyon.com). Left: a sunken champagne bath in a kitchen designed by Tom Howley

Developers follow the trend

Rory Cramer, the head of consultancy at Marsh & Parsons New Homes, says: “Developers have become much more creative when planning dedicated areas for home bars. At the top end of the market, a bar has become a must-have. Buyers are drawn to the opportunity to display or taste premium wine collections while entertaining.”

In the Nova penthouse in Victoria, southwest London, Bowler James Brindley, an interior design studio, commissioned a striking Seventies-style bar. Made by Justin Van Breda, the bar is wrapped in leather and has brass elements, with perforations on the front.

Anna Temkin ■