

TRICKY TOSS

With just the right manipulation of bar tools and liquor bottles, serving drinks can be juggled into an entertainment.

Juggling four liquor bottles at one time, 22-year-old bartender, Marlo Guearra, demonstrated some basic moves to “flair tending” in a Wan Chai bar.

Flair tending, also known as *flairing*, is a technique where bartenders play tricks with bar tools and liquor bottles while mixing a beverage.

“Flairing is a performance,” said Mr Guearra. “I got interested in flairing because of the entertainment. It’s about making a show to the customers and having fun with people.”

But other than simply juggling and flipping liquor bottles, Mr Guearra likes to turn his entertainment up a notch every Friday and Saturday with a more advanced routine that involves naked flame.

Admitting the fiery performance is dangerous, he declared that he practises the routine with empty plastic bottles, then empty flair bottles, at a beach until perfect.

But actual performances for customers require Mr Guearra to flair with liquor-filled bottles, which increases

the difficulty of the routine because the liquor adds weight to the bottles. He then needs to adjust the weight of the bottle to make the routine flawless.

Learning the art of flairing through the Internet, Mr Guearra mastered his skills through endless practise.

Practising at least two hours a day prepared Mr Guearra to attend international competitions including Joe Bananas’ Flair Competition III and IV and the Sky Vodka International Competition in Armani bar in Central. His hard work paid off when he made a finalist in Joe Bananas’ competition in 2008.

Countless hours devoted to flairing allowed Mr Guearra to advance his skills and adopt basketball and dance moves into his regular routines.

Jitman Limbu, 28, echoed the importance of practice by revealing he spent two to three hours a day sharpening his flairing skills.

“Carry your equipment with you so you can practise anytime. The more you practise, the better you get,” said Mr Limbu, while explaining that people tend to create their own style through continual practice.

Due to the difficulty in using full bottles, Mr Limbu chooses to flair with

half a bottle and practises his routine with a plastic bottle that simulates the weight of an actual flair bottle.

Flair bottles used in performances and plastic bottles used for practising can be bought through the Internet and in Mong Kok with a price ranging between HK\$180 to over HK\$300.

Courses are also available in the city with current flair tenders as instructors of the programme. Ben Ho Pun-hong, 33, has competed in many local and overseas flair-tending competitions and taught flairing at different institutions.

Mr Ho’s courses normally consist of four two-and-a-half-hour lessons and costs around HK\$900. Flairing equipment and alcohol are usually provided in classes depending on the organisation that holds the course.

With six years of flairing experience, his advice to beginners is not get too cocky and ignore negative criticism by others.

The Hong Kong Cocktail School also offers flair-tending courses at the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. The courses teach the evolution of flairing, basic equipment and its use, basic flairing moves and last but not the least, the experience of seasoned instructors. *Tiffany Ngai* 

