

Save the Drink

Every bartender messes up. The difference is what happens next. Pros don't panic. They diagnose fast, fix clean, and keep the room moving.

FIX IN THIS ORDER

Cold → Dilution → Balance → Strength

1. Diagnose in five seconds

- 1

Is it cold enough? Warm cocktails taste sloppy even when the spec is perfect.
- 2

Did it dilute enough? Hot and sharp usually means under-diluted.
- 3

Is it balanced? Is one thing yelling — sweet, sour, bitter, booze?
- 4

Is the glass or the ice wrong? Some drinks fail on that alone.

2. Find it. Fix it.

THE PROBLEM	WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS	THE FIX	NEVER
Too sweet	Too much syrup or liqueur, not enough acid, no bitter structure.	Small hit of citrus. Dash of bitters. Highball? Tighten with more ice, fresh bubbles, citrus finish.	Never fix sweet with more alcohol.
Too sour	Too much citrus, or not enough sweet to round it.	Small amount of sweet. If it went thin from over-shaking, a tiny sweet adjustment usually handles it.	Never cover sour with more spirit.
Too strong / boozy	Often it isn't strong - it's warm and under-diluted.	Stir longer on good ice. Shake harder and strain clean. On rocks, check your ice. The Old Fashioned needs the big rock.	Never pour extra sweet to soften booze.
Watery / dead	Over-diluted, weak build, flat mixer, old citrus, or it sat too long.	Highball: fresh bubbles, full ice, citrus finish. Sour: usually a remake. Spirit-forward: remake and protect your name.	Diluted past repair? Remake it.
Flat	Needs acid, aroma, bubbles, or it needs to be colder.	Touch of citrus. Expressed peel. Highballs get fresh bubbles and fresh ice.	Don't serve it and hope.
Too bitter	Too much amaro or bitters, wrong vermouth - or the guest just doesn't like bitter.	Tiny sweet to round. Small citrus to lift. Negroni family: lengthen with soda, Americano-style.	Never argue about bitter. Fix it or pivot.
Muddy / cluttered	Too many flavors in one range, too many sweet parts, no acid structure.	Small citrus to separate. Expressed peel to lift. Still muddy? Remake it simpler.	A drink with too many ingredients is not saved by adding more.
Not cold enough	Warm glass, weak shake or stir, bad ice, or it sat.	Re-chill the glass. Shake or stir properly. Don't build in a warm glass and hope.	Cold is a spec.

3. Adjust, or start over?

Adjust when

- It's close.
- One knob is off.
- You can fix it clean.

One move, and it lands.

Remake when

- It's over-diluted.
- It's muddy or cluttered.
- It's the wrong drink — the order was wrong.
- Saving it takes longer than doing it right.

A clean remake is faster than a messy rescue.

Work the Room

Fixing the drink is half of it. The other half is what you say while you do it — and knowing when to stop fixing and just start over.

4. When they say it's wrong — and you know it's right

Sometimes the drink is correct and the **order** is not. Don't get defensive. Translate.

“ Do you want it brighter, or smoother?

“ Is it the sweet, the tart, or the strength?

“ Do you like this style normally, or are we trying something new?

You're not here to win an argument. **You're here to land the drink.**

5. Check in without sounding like a survey

Don't say “Are you enjoying it?” like a survey. Say something that gets you a real answer. It's a check-in, an experiment, and an upsell all at once.

“ How's that citrus pop hitting?

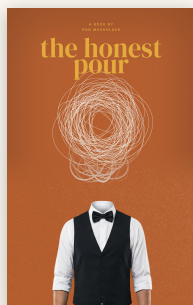
“ You like that bite on the finish, or want it smoother?

“ That one's spirit-forward. Want it drier next round?

“ That drink's supposed to be bright. Is it landing bright for you?

AND NEVER FORGET THE REAL PRODUCT:

the way the guest feels *when they leave.*



This is one appendix.

There are five more, plus the book they came out of. Roots and Lanes, so you stop guessing. 80+ recipes in ounces, with notes that actually matter. And the service side, because you don't get paid for the drink — you get paid for what happens around the drink.

It isn't just a recipe book. It's a bartender's playbook.

[Get The Honest Pour on Amazon](#)

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