

THE LOWDOWN ON BACK BAR COOLERS

By Amanda McCorquodale, Contributing Editor

While bartenders dazzle guests with colorful cocktails and showy preparations, behind the bar are often-overlooked workhorses quietly contributing to the operation's success. As their compressors purr night and day, these back bar coolers efficiently keep wine, beer and other items chilled at their optimum temperatures, while providing enough storage for service to run smoothly. And they often have to look good doing it, as some models also function as a way to merchandise bar product, adding to a bar's overall ambiance.

Consider The Contents

When choosing a back bar cooler, first think about the quantity and diversity of beverages you want to store, and then weigh the available configurations and temperature options. If you'll be serving draft beverages, instead of specifying a separate keg cooler, you can incorporate it into your back bar cooler. For example, a manufacturer could configure a four-door cooler so that the keg sits behind two of the doors and shelf storage resides behind the other two.

Next consider how racks and doors maximize storage and access to drinks. Some back bar coolers come built with door openings large enough to accommodate two vertical rows for wine bottles whereas others offer special wine rack options in which bottles can be stored horizontally. (One maker points out, however, that wine in a commercial setting doesn't have to be stored on its side to keep its cork moist because it will likely be used before any storage issues arise.) You also can



There are a lot of choices—from configurations to temperatures, aesthetics to door types—when specifying these hardworking beverage chillers. Here at The Albert in Chicago, bartenders count on multiple Perlick Back Bar Refrigerators—a two-door BBS60 (left) and a three-door BBS84 (right).

Photo by Kevin Miyazaki



line with other under-bar equipment, coolers can be as shallow as 24-in.D but can go up to nearly 30-in.D.

Back bar cooler height may measure about 36 in. as manufacturers design them to slide under an existing bar or built-in cabinets. Some lower profile units can be as short as 30 in. with the option to add 6 in. with legs or casters.

The most variation comes in the width of back bar cooler models, so choose the unit that best maximizes storage for your needs. Units come in one, two, three or four-door options that range from 24 in. to 108 in. in width. Some back bar coolers will have multiple zones to chill one section for beer and another for red wine, for example.

Design Decisions

In addition to factoring in what types of products you'll be storing and your available space, make sure that your back bar cooler has the right design for your business in terms of function and aesthetics. Some manufacturers offer a pass-

thru style that can be accessed from both sides. Designers often specify this style in island bars or in layouts where the cooler is stocked from the back and served from the front.

To match your bar's flow and

The work area behind a bar can be tight. Certain makers offer a line of shallow-depth back bar refrigerators in addition to standard-depth units. *Courtesy of Master-Bilt.*



Base-Model, Single-Zone-Temp,

Two-Door Back Bar Coolers With Self-Contained Refrigeration

Some back bar coolers come standard with NSF certification for open food storage while it's an option on other models. *Courtesy of Beverage-Air.*

find back bar coolers with storage drawers or rotary shelves to give users easier access to a variety of wine and beer bottles.

Back bar coolers can store other items such as milk and cream, along with food ingredients for beverage garnishes, including olives, onions, pickles and more. Certain higher-end models earn NSF certification as food-grade units. These units typically come with an interior that's

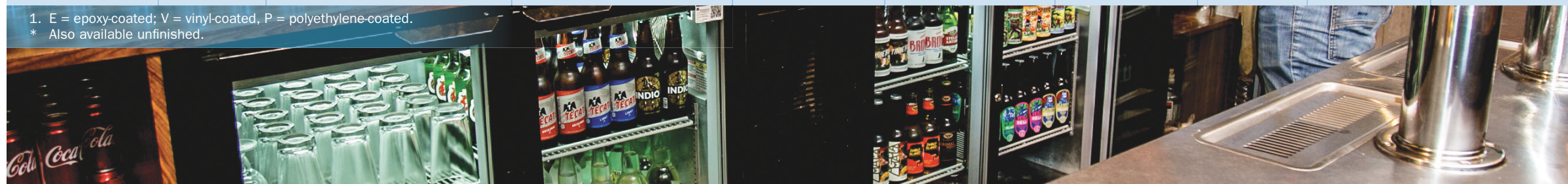
all stainless with rounded corners for easy cleaning, have been tested to maintain proper air temperature (below 40°F) and have no unnecessary exposed screws and cracks. Operations that store food items might prefer a cooler with solid doors to hide the hodgepodge collection. But glass doors make it easier to locate ingredients.

Perfect Fit

The space between the back and front bar can be fairly tight and so, typically, manufacturers design back bar coolers with somewhat shallow depths to conserve space. To keep flush in

MAKE	MODEL	DIMENSIONS (WxDxH) (IN.)	DOORS FIELD REVERSIBLE	STAINLESS OR GALVANIZED	NSF CERTIFIED FOR OPEN FOOD STORAGE	STAINLESS TOP	RACK MATERIAL ¹	LED LIGHTING	MULLION HEATER
ARCTIC AIR	ABB48G	49 ¹ / ₈ x 24 x 39 ⁵ / ₈	N	S	Y	Y	E	Y	N
BEVERAGE-AIR	BB58HC	59 X 29 ¹ / ₈ X 37 ¹ / ₄	Y	G, S floor	N	Y	E	Y	N
GLASTENDER	C1FB60	60 x 25 ¹ / ₄ x 36	N	S	Y	Y*	E	Y	Y
HOSHIZAKI	HBB-2-59	59 ¹ / ₂ x 29 x 36 ⁴ / ₅	N	S	Y	Y	E	Y	N
KROWNE	BS60	60 x 25 x 36	Y	S	Y	Y	E	Y	Y
MASTER-BILT	MBBB59	59 x 29 ⁵ / ₈ x 37	N	G, S floor	N	Y	V	Y	N
NOR-LAKE	NLBB59	59 x 29 ⁵ / ₈ x 37	N	G, S floor	N	Y	V	Y	N
PERLICK	BBS60	60 x 24 ³ / ₄ x 34 ⁹ / ₁₆	Y	S	Y	Y	V	Y	Y
TURBO AIR	TBB-3SB-N	69 x 27 ¹ / ₄ x 37 ¹ / ₈	N	S	Y	Y	P	Y	N

1. E = epoxy-coated; V = vinyl-coated, P = polyethylene-coated.
* Also available unfinished.



One Big Unit Or Two Small Units?

Confronted with all the many configurations of back bar coolers, users might be left wondering if it makes more sense to specify a pair of two-door units instead of one four-door unit. Opinions vary. Some manufacturers argue to go with two-door units instead of a four-door unit to decrease the number of times the same cooler will be opened, allowing the unit to better maintain temperatures. They also point out that having multiple units instead of one large cooler means that operations will have at least one working back bar cooler if the other is out of service.

Other manufacturers say that specifying redundant equipment in case one breaks down doesn't make sense (financially and space-wise) for a business and that larger back bar coolers come outfitted with right-sized refrigeration units that make them just as efficient at maintaining temperature.

the location of outlets, pay attention to whether the unit's compressor is on the right or left side. Select manufacturers allow customers to choose either a right- or left-side compressor. This is particularly important when you'll be using more than one back bar cooler in your lineup. These units shouldn't have their compressors directly next to each other because it could impact the longevity of the equipment and may even void its warranty.

Some coolers have multiple temperature zones. Chill one zone for beer and another for red wine. Glass doors and special lighting help merchandise product. *Courtesy of Krowne.*

Because many back bar coolers back up to walls or sandwich between cabinets and other equipment, these units tend to have front vents, or if they're on casters, they could vent from the bottom. Make sure the vents are accessible. And if the unit vents from the bottom, note that the interior

An unfinished top works perfect in situations where the back bar cooler will fit underneath a countertop. Otherwise units typically come with stainless tops. *Courtesy of Glastender.*

space may make it a challenge to store a full-height keg, three rows of beer bottles or two rows of vertically stored wine bottles.

Also think about where a service agent will perform repairs. Typically, small back bar coolers are either rear- or side-serviced. Front-serviced units are available and are a good option for bars in which the back bar cooler is built in and difficult to pull out.

Some manufacturers build units so that their doors can be switched to open on either the right or left side to maximize efficiency within the bar layout and flow. Specifiers also can choose between glass doors to show off well-organized stock or solid doors. And some manufacturers allow you to mix and match door styles on the same unit while others stick with one type of door. Doors can be either hinged or sliding.

Back bar cooler doors, particularly those that are glass, can show condensation if they are used outside or if enough humid air is inside. To combat this, some back bar coolers come outfitted with heating elements called mullion heaters that fit within the face of the refrigerator's frame to prevent condensation from forming on the exterior of the unit.

Ideally, doors should have handles with built-in locks for loss prevention and a design that minimizes catching clothing or apron strings as employees brush by them in tight quarters. Check to see how easy it would be to replace the door handle if it breaks. Some manufacturers build handles that attach to the doors while others recess them into the face of the door.

While many back bar coolers come in black or stainless finishes, there are units that come unlaminated, ready for a custom finish to match the rest of the bar. Likewise, many units come with a standard stainless top but if you are going to put the back bar unit under a cabinet or countertop,



IDEAL SERVING TEMP

BEER	37°F–50°F
WHITE WINE	49°F–55°F
RED WINE	62°F–68°F



Installing the unit between cabinets and up against a wall? Go with a front-breathing unit with zero clearance requirements in the rear and on the sides. *Courtesy of Hoshizaki.*

you may be able to save some cost by choosing an unfinished top.

Energy Concerns

Like any refrigeration equipment, back bar coolers can be expensive to run, so take note of any area to optimize energy efficiency. For example, while deciding between glass or solid doors might seem like an aesthetic choice, note that glass doors are less energy

efficient, meaning that the unit will have to work harder to maintain proper temperatures. Also related to saving energy, many units come standard with energy-efficient LED lighting. The lights illuminate stock when users open doors and shows off product when they're closed.

Study all options when building a back bar cooler; when you make the right choice, it will prove to be a hardworker behind the bar for years to come.

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BACK BAR COOLER GALLERY

ARCTIC AIR BACK BAR REFRIGERATORS

Arctic Air offers the ABB48, ABB60 and ABB72 Back Bar Refrigerators. Units meet NSF requirements for open food storage. Equipment highlights include a front-breathing design, a front-accessible condensing unit for easy cleaning and maintenance and a self-contained capillary tube system that uses environmentally friendly CFC-free refrigerant. Temperature range is 33°F-41°F. The top sports 1½-in. solid foamed stainless. Units measure 24-in.D to conserve workspace. The stainless interior boasts LED lighting; the exterior cabinet construction consists of black powder-coated steel on the front and sides. Unit comes standard with ¾-in. casters; two casters lock.

arcticairstore.com



BEVERAGE-AIR BB58HC

Beverage-Air's BB58HC Back Bar Refrigerator offers functionality for nearly any application. Its full electronic control, stay-open door feature and self-closing doors allow for easy use in the field. A balanced, forced-air R-290 refrigeration system provides rapid chilling of product. Temperature range is 36°F-38°F. The BB58HC also offers a stainless top, field-reversible doors, LED lighting, magnetic door gaskets and door locks—all standard. Available with exterior black or stainless front and doors, interior galvanized steel on walls and ceiling with a heavy-duty stainless floor. Options include stainless interior; food-rated models; wine models (40°F-60°F); solid, glass or sliding doors; and compressor mounted on right or left side.

beverage-air.com



GLASTENDER SPACE-MAXIMIZING COOLERS

Glastender's Space-Maximizing Coolers offer increased capacity and functionality in a compact footprint. C1SB Coolers are 1-zone, side-serviced, bar-profile units. Choose from 24-in.W or 28-in.W 1-door units and 36-in.W, 44-in.W or 48-in.W 2-door models. Coolers offer beer, white wine or red wine temperatures, ranging 34°F-65°F; left or right compressor compartment locations; and doors and drawers in a variety of finishes. Configure the coolers for shelf storage or draft beverage dispensing. Tops come unfinished, stainless or laminated, and the LED lighting can be bright white, warm white, amber or blue. C1SB has earned NSF certification for open food storage.

glastender.com



HOSHIZAKI BB-G SERIES

BB-G Series Back Bar Refrigerators With Glass Swing Doors come in widths of 59½-in., 69½-in., 80-in. and 95½-in. Units sport stainless interiors with LED lights, an 18-gauge stainless top and maximum product storage capacity with the ability to store tall boys three-high per section. Energy efficient low-E multi-pane glass self-closing doors come standard with barrel locks. Units maintain NSF temperatures in 100°F ambient air. Electronic controller features a digital LED display. Front-breathing, side-mounted refrigeration is easy to access by sliding out the front for cleaning and service. Units come with zero clearance requirements on the sides and rear. They use environmentally friendly R290 refrigerant.

hoshizaki-america.com



KROWNE PASS-THRU BACK BAR REFRIGERATION

Krowne's Self-Contained Pass-Thru Back Bar Refrigeration allows for access on either side, which is ideal for an island-style application. Doors self-close under 90° to save energy while keeping products at an optimal temperature; they stay open pass 90° for loading and unloading purposes. Bright-white, down-action LED lights are aesthetically designed and come standard to allow for easy viewing of products. All units come standard with stainless, cove-corner interior, which increases cleanability and prevents seepage. Door handles are full length for easy opening, stainless for increased durability, and include built-in locks to easily prevent theft. Operating temperature is 30°F-40°F.

krowne.com



MASTER-BILT MBBB SERIES

Master-Bilt's MBBB Series Solid Door Back Bar Refrigerators, part of the Fusion Series, come either 59-in.W, 69½-in.W, 80¾-in.W or 95¼-in.W. Internal capacity allows for stacking of three tall boys. Units boast a stainless top with a black finish on the front, doors, sides and back. Interior consists of galvanized steel with a stainless floor. Door openings sport plastic breaker strips to reduce condensation. Adjustable shelves, interior LED lighting and door locks come standard. The self-contained refrigeration system uses R-134a refrigerant; temperature range is 34°F-38°F. The condensing unit slides out for easy cleaning and service. Front-breathing condenser is on left side.

master-bilt.com



BACK BAR COOLER GALLERY



NOR-LAKE ADVANTEDGE GLASS DOOR BACK BAR REFRIGERATORS

The AdvantEDGE Glass Door Back Bar Refrigerators come in widths ranging from 59-in. to 95¼-in. Coolers come with stainless top and black exterior front, sides and back. Interior walls consist of galvanized steel and the floor is stainless. Glass doors include locks, magnetic door gaskets and plastic breaker strips around the openings to limit the formation of condensation. Each door section has two adjustable shelves. LED lighting is included. Coolers use R-134a refrigerant and the temperature range is 34°F-38°F. Condensing unit slides out for easy service. Optional features include 4-in. plate casters, floor racks and shelves with product guides.

norlake.com



PERLICK SELF-CONTAINED BACK BAR REFRIGERATORS

Choose from 1-, 2-, 3- or 4-door models of Perlick's Self-Contained Back Bar Refrigerators. Units sport refrigerator and wine drawers. End-wall refrigeration featuring digital controls may be mounted on the left or right side. Models are NSF-7 certified for open storage and UL listed for the U.S. and Canada. Choose from temperature range 33°F-40°F (refrigerator), 50°F-55°F (white wine), or 60°F-65°F (red wine). Energy-efficient, long-lasting LED interior lighting comes standard; choose from Crisp White or Cool Blue. Models are front-vented and use R290 hydrocarbon refrigerant. Anti-sweat heaters in the cabinet face prevent condensation.

perlick.com



TURBO AIR SUPER DELUXE SERIES

Self-cleaning condensers come standard on Turbo Air's Super Deluxe Series Back Bars. A rotating brush automatically dusts off the condenser daily, which prevents compressor failure from buildup and saves operators time and money. Forced air cooling system quickly cools and maintains consistent temperature (33°F-38°F) throughout the unit. The stainless countertop and interior make for easy cleaning and durability. Other highlights include LED interior lighting; easily adjustable, heavy-duty, polyethylene-coated wire shelves; front-breathing, side-mount compressor for easy service; and door locks. Back bars measure 69-in.W x 27¼-in.D x 37½-in.H.

turboairinc.com