

VINCENT ROA

THE FINAL POUR

Ten Years Behind the Bar

TIME



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First Edition

Fuego Cocktails

For Angila.

For every late night, every early morning,
and every moment you believed in this
before I did.

Bartending was never really about drinks.
It was about people.

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INTRODUCTION

Behind the Bar



In 2010, I began learning how to bartend.

I wasn't looking for a dream. I was looking for a second income. I was divorced.

Paying support. Trying to stay afloat. Bartending wasn't supposed to change my life. It was supposed to help me survive.

I wasn't trying to start a business. I wasn't chasing entrepreneurship. I wasn't planning a ten-year journey that would eventually lead to hundreds of events, thousands of guests, and a book called *The Final Pour*. I simply wanted to learn a new skill.

Like many people, I was searching for opportunity. I was curious about bartending because it combined several things I enjoyed: working with people, learning a craft, and creating experiences. What started as a simple interest quickly became something much larger.

The more I learned, the more I realized that bartending wasn't really about making drinks. Anyone can learn recipes. Anyone can memorize ingredients. The true skill is hospitality. Hospitality is the ability to make people feel welcome. To make them feel comfortable. To make them feel seen. The drink is often just the excuse for the interaction.

At the time, I didn't fully understand that lesson. I would learn it one event at a time.

In 2011, I booked my first private event. It was a themed birthday party. I was nervous. Excited. Unsure of what to expect.

What I didn't know was that a single evening would set in motion a decade-long journey that would eventually become *Fuego Cocktails*.

Over the next ten years, I had the privilege of serving at weddings, birthday parties, corporate events, holiday celebrations, networking mixers, and countless other gatherings throughout California and Arizona.

Some events were small. Some were massive. Some were easy. Some were challenging. Each one taught a lesson. Each one added another chapter to the story.

Along the way, I learned far more than how to bartend. I learned about business. I learned about leadership. I learned about preparation. I learned about relationships. I learned that people rarely remember every detail of a drink, but they always remember how they were treated.

I learned that trust is earned slowly and lost quickly. I learned that professionalism matters most when things go wrong. I learned that success is rarely achieved alone. And I learned that some of the most meaningful moments in life happen during celebrations.

What makes this story special isn't the cocktails. It's the people. The guests who became friends. The clients who became repeat customers. The families who invited us back year after year. The couples who trusted us with one of the most important days of their lives. The coworkers, vendors, and hospitality professionals who shared the journey.

And most importantly, Angila, who stood beside me through every challenge, every success, and every late-night drive home.

This book is not a bartending manual. It is not a business textbook. And it is not a collection of cocktail recipes. It is a story. A story about building something from nothing. A story about learning through experience. A story about taking a chance on an opportunity and discovering where it leads.

Most of all, it is a story about people.

Because when I look back on ten years behind the bar, I don't remember every drink I served. I remember the conversations. I remember the laughter. I remember the friendships. I remember the moments. Those memories are the reason this book exists.

This is the story of Fuego Cocktails. This is the story of ten years behind the bar. And this is the story of what happened between the first pour and the final one.

REFLECTION

Those early events weren't glamorous. But they were honest. And honesty, I'd learn, is the most underrated ingredient in hospitality.

PART I — Beginnings

The beginnings

CHAPTER 1

The First Event



Everyone remembers their first time. For me, it wasn't a glamorous wedding, a packed nightclub, or a high-end corporate event. It was a birthday party with a "Pimps and Hoes" theme. At the time, I had no idea that one evening would eventually lead to ten years behind the bar and the creation of Fuego Cocktails.

I was still learning. Bartending was something I found interesting, but I hadn't yet convinced myself that it could become a business. I certainly hadn't imagined it becoming such an important chapter of my life.

When I arrived at the party, I immediately knew this wasn't going to be an ordinary gathering. The guests had fully committed to the theme. Men wore oversized hats, colorful suits, and fake gold chains. Women arrived dressed in 1970s-inspired outfits that looked like they had stepped out of another era. Costume jewelry from local party stores was everywhere. The music matched the atmosphere perfectly, creating the kind of energy that immediately made people smile.

I remember feeling nervous. Not because the guests were difficult. Quite the opposite. They were incredibly welcoming. As a new bartender, there is always a fear that you'll make mistakes. You worry about whether you'll remember drink recipes, whether you'll work quickly enough, and whether people will enjoy the experience you're providing.

Those fears disappeared surprisingly fast. The guests were friendly, patient, and excited to be there. They treated me like part of the party instead of someone simply working behind the bar. Throughout the evening, people stopped to talk. They asked questions. They shared stories. They laughed and posed for photos. Several guests offered me food and made sure I felt included in the celebration.

What I didn't realize at the time was that I was learning my first lesson about hospitality. People rarely remember every detail about a drink. They remember how you made them feel. That lesson would follow me throughout every event I worked for the next decade.

As the night continued, I found myself becoming more comfortable. The nervousness began to fade. The drinks flowed more smoothly. Conversations became easier. For the first time, I could see what experienced bartenders meant when they talked about creating an atmosphere. The bar wasn't just a place where drinks were served. It was where conversations started. It was where strangers met. It was where memories were made.

Near the end of the evening, something happened that completely changed the trajectory of my future. Several guests approached me and asked if I bartended other events. At first, I wasn't sure how to answer. I hadn't really thought that far ahead.



"Weddings were never just events. They were milestones people remembered forever."

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and a silver watch, is pouring whiskey from a large, ornate silver dispenser into a glass. The dispenser is shaped like a bottle of Jack Daniel's. The bar is set up outdoors on a red patterned tablecloth. In the background, there is a black metal fence and a desert landscape with yellowish-brown hills and some greenery. Other people are visible in the background, including a man in a dark shirt and a woman in a black dress. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early evening.

One successful event leads to
another.

Show the people how important they are and they will show you how important you are to them.

Testimonials

Shad E.

We literally booked our date around his schedule because we wanted him to be there.

Amanda B.

Seattle, WA

They were professional, helpful, warm and very kind.

Jody O.

....they were so much fun!

There's a particular kind of humility that comes from being bad at something you care about. You show up anyway. You watch people who are better than you. You take notes. You practice at home with cheap bottles and YouTube videos.

I wasn't building a business yet. I was building a foundation — one awkward pour at a time.

A bartender in a red shirt is pouring a drink from a silver shaker into a glass. The glass contains a light-colored, frothy drink and is garnished with a lemon slice. The bartender is holding the shaker with their right hand and the glass with their left hand. The background is a blurred bar setting with various bottles and lights.

CHAPTER 2

Building Fuego Cocktails

Enjoying The Final Pour?
Continue the journey with the complete book.

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