

Building a party bar



Any home brewer who says they wouldn't love a bar to pour their beer from is quite frankly a big fat liar. So we finally gave into the desire and had a go at building our own party bar to serve beer from and forgive me for being smug, but I think it turned out pretty damn awesome so I thought I'd share the details with you so you too can have your own party bar.

This blog post is written specifically as an instruction guide for building a bar as a DIY project so forgive me for being a bit boring as I go through step by step guides and show you my little doodled plans.

Hey you'll thank me if you have a go at building your own bar – and if you do, I'd love to see photos of the finished build.

Equipment for the build

- Workbench and clamps
- Saw (I used a handsaw but a circular bench saw would be quicker and neater)
- Power Drill +22 mm cutting bit to make holes for taps
- Power screwdriver
- Hammer
- Spirit level
- Tape measure
- Pencil

Materials

- Floorboards -20mm X 120mm
- Framing- 19mm X 38mm
- Feather boarding – 100mm wide
- Pressure treated boards 100mm x 20mm (used for bar top and tap board – make sure these are a suitable thickness relative to the length of the shanks on your beer taps)
- 4 Heavy duty casters
- Screws
- Panel pins / ribbed nails
- Sandpaper
- Wood stain
- Felt or other dark fabric to cover the beer lines and kegs to prevent skunking or unwanted fiddling with the set up of your kit

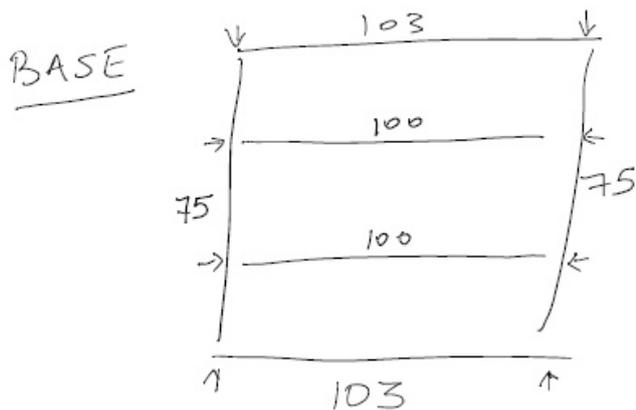
Step by step guide

Okay, here I've included my hand drawn doodles but I've also typed out my instructions, so don't worry if you can't read my handwriting, it's all here. Now remember, we built this to fit the sizes we needed to fit four kegs inside buckets of ice, and to fit the space on our patio etc., your sizes might be different. Also, I'm a Librarian, not a joiner and my woodworking skills were mostly developed during time spent building stage sets for an amateur theatre company, so Chippendale I ain't!

Step 1 – The Base

The base is essentially a big square frame with 2 inner bracing bars to keep the shape rigid and also to support the flooring and spread the weight once the kegs are in place. The framing is formed by screwing together lengths of 19mm x 38mm

framing, the flooring was made using 20 mm x 120mm floor boards which we had left over from another project. You could use a solid piece of mdf or other boarding for the floor – the key issue is to ensure it will be strong enough to hold the kegs – we had 4 full kegs plus buckets of ice water and the CO2 tank so the total load was about 120kg. Whichever type of floor is fitted ensure that space is left at either side to fit the uprights which will form the tap board and for the corner posts. If your bar is to be mobile, it may be worth fitting the casters at this point as it will help with working out heights for the bar top/back board – depending on the casters you use they can add 6 inches or more to the height of the finished bar.



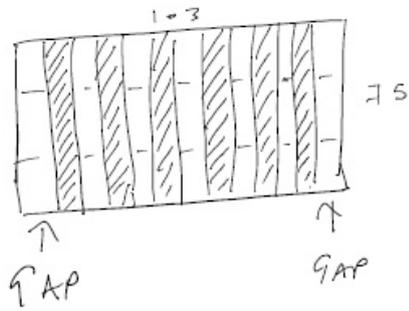
FIX @ \uparrow 's WITH 2 SCREWS
ON EACH JOINT.





The floor is screwed onto the frame.

FLOOR



ADD FLOORBOARDS, LEAVING GAPS AT OUTER EDGES TO ALLOW FOR FITTING UPRIGHTS.

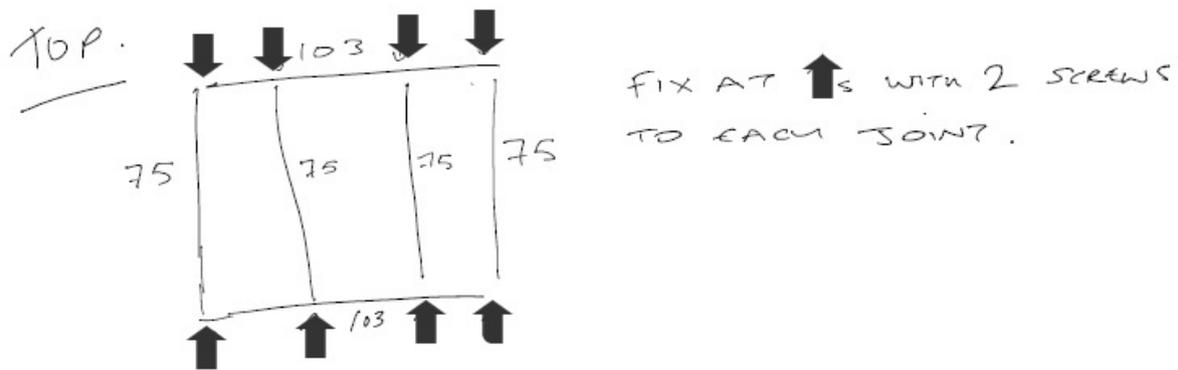


CASTERS.

WE FITTED 4 CASTERS TO THE FLOORBOARDS TO ALLOW EASY MOVEMENT OF THE BAR, FITTING THESE TO THE FLOOR RATHER THAN THE FRAME REDUCED THE EFFECT ON THE HEIGHT OF THE BAR.

Step 2 – The Top:

The top frame is constructed in a similar way to the bottom, however the bracing runs in the opposite direction to support the boards which will form the bar top. As with the base the corner joints were formed so that the “front” of the frame overlaps the sides to form a neater looking finish. We left the screws/nails etc visible but you could counter sink these and then use wood filler to conceal them.



Step 3 – Corner posts

The corner posts were formed by doubling up 2 pieces of the framing timber to form square posts – we used contact adhesive and screws to hold these together – as with many of our measurements and methods we were making the best use of the materials we had to hand rather than purpose buying additional timber for specific purposes – this kept the build costs down, but did mean a bit of extra work/ingenuity at times! You could just buy square posts in the first place.

The length of the corner posts will be determined by a couple of factors:

- the clearance height required to accommodate the kegs in their cooling buckets and the connectors, with space to reach in and attach/adjust these
- the desired height for the bar top

These measurements will vary depending on your kit and your own preferences (and height) but in our case we have corny kegs with pinlock connectors and Eli is 5' tall so we settled on a height of 900mm for the posts, adding in the height of the casters this makes the bartop 965mm from the ground.

Depending on the dimensions of your bar you may also want to put in some additional posts in the middle of the longer edge of the frame. This might be good to prevent the bar top from

sagging or bending if it's quite long – we put one in the centre of the front – mostly to act as an extra contact point for the cladding – we didn't put one on the back as it would have made putting the kegs inside a bit trickier.

CORNER POSTS.



MAKE 4 POSTS FROM DOUBLE LENGTHS OF FRAMING (OR BUY SOME LENGTHS OF SQUARE CUT POSTS).. HEIGHT WILL VARY DEPENDING ON TYPE/SIZE OF KEGS + CONNECTORS, WE SETTLED ON 35" / FOR PINLOCK LORNY KEGS FIT POSTS TO INSIDE OF FRAMES TOP + BOTTOM. WITH SCREWS AT ↑'S





Step 4 – Uprights & Bar Top & Tap Board

Two uprights, roughly centre of the frame (sides) will form the frame for the tapboard – their positioning relative to the front of the bar and their height will depend on:

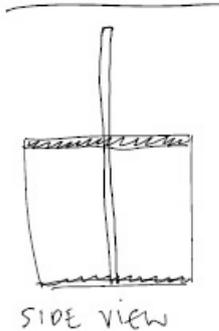
- What type of taps you have – you need clearance under the taps for glasses
- What your reach is for pouring – ie how high can you reach and how far back (so how deep will the bar top be)
- Do you want extra height above the taps – to put tap labels, a bar sign or in our case to display the handmade mash paddle we were given as a wedding present. Best to err on the side of caution and make the upright too long and cut it back rather than find yourself short.

We went with a bar top that is 3 boards wide, and the tapboard is 7 boards high. The bar top is wide enough to accommodate a bar runner/drip tray etc. All the boards are screwed in place to ensure a tight fit and stable surface for the taps – last thing you want is to go to pull a pint and have the whole board come away in your hand!

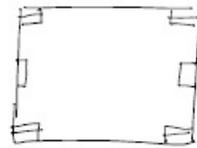
Fit the planks for the bar top and tap board into position – remembering to drill the holes for the taps into the correct board before fitting that one in place – its easier to do this

on the workbench to make sure the holes are straight and level.

UPRIGHTS:



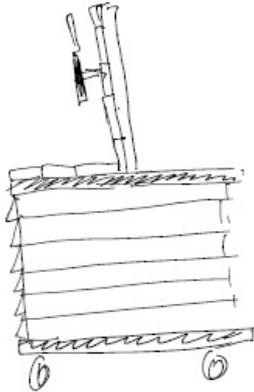
FIT 2 UPRIGHTS, ONE EACH SIDE ON INNER FACE OF FRAME,



HEIGHT IS DETERMINED BY HOW HIGH TAPS WILL BE SET (WHICH WILL DEPEND ON TYPE) OURS IS 1600mm, WE HAVE EUROPEAN STOUT TAPS (WE LIKE HOW THEY LOOK)

+ WE ALSO WANTED TO AVOID CUTTING THE PLANKING SO WORKED OUT SPACING TO THE NEAREST WHOLE PLANK FOR BOTH HEIGHT OF BACKBOARD + DEPTH OF BAR TOP.

TOP SECTION:



BAR TOP + BACKBOARD ARE FORMED FROM PLANKING. WE USED 3 BOARDS AS BAR TOP AND 1 FOR THE BACKBOARD, WITH TAPS FITTED ON BOARD 4 FROM THE BOTTOM

DECIDE ON TAP HEIGHT + POSITION + THEN DRILL OUT (EVENLY!)

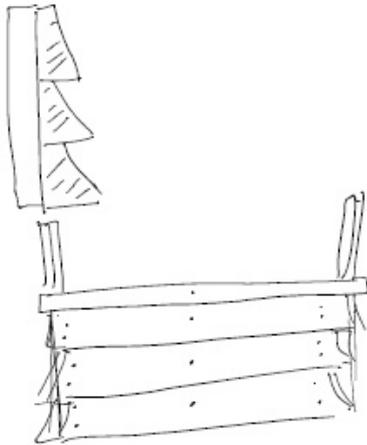


Step 5 – Cladding

Now that the basic frame is complete you can start adding the cladding. We used pressure treated featherboard as this is an outside bar and we wanted it to withstand the elements – featherboard will allow any rainwater (or spilled beer) to run off the sides easily. As with the rest of the framing, we allowed an overlap either end of the cladding on the front of the bar so that it hides the ends of the pieces fitted to the sides. When fitting the last piece at the bottom of the front face, this piece is set at a slight outward angle due to the flooring protruding over the edge of the frame – however because we used feather board this was easy to accommodate and

the addition of an additional piece of framing as fascia plate covered over the small gap.

BOTTOM SECTION:



FEATHER BOARDING, FIXED NARROW EDGE AT TOP, AND WITH A SLIGHT OVERLAP EITHER SIDE ON FRONT FACE FOR NEATER LOOK. BOARDS ARE NAILED RATHER THAN SCREWED.

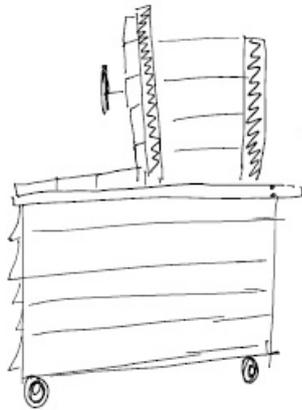


Step 6 – Covering your rear

To protect the beer lines from light and to prevent unwanted or accidental tampering with the lines/gas tec. we added side cladding above the bar top at the rear of the tap board – adding a small upright to the rear edge to help anchor the boards. The final protection is a sheet of black felt the width of the tapboard stapled above the taps which drops over

the beer lines and kegs to keep them out of the light and out of sight.

PROTECTING / COVERING BEER LINES.



WE ADDED ADDITIONAL PANELING TO THE SIDES ABOVE BARTOP LEVEL TO PREVENT INTERFERENCE WITH BEER LINES + TO KEEP OUT THE LIGHT.

ADD A SHORT UPRIGHT TO THE OUTER EDGE OF THE REAR OF THE BAR + FRAME IN AS YOU DID WITH THE BOTTOM

ATTACH FELT OR OTHER DARK FABRIC TO REAR OF BAR TO COVER BEER LINES.



Step 7 – finishing touches

Once the build is complete you can then sand down all the outer surfaces and paint/stain/varnish as you wish. As our bar will be for outdoor use, we used Ronseal exterior woodstain

which has given the wood a nice warm color and also gives a good waterproof protection.

Equipment for the bar side of things (taps etc)

Our bar holds four kegs and has four taps. Remember that without the actual beer dispensing equipment your bar is just a big wooden box.

You would need;

- Taps
- Shanks
- Beer line & Gas line
- John Guest connectors or sankey connectors
- Corny or sankey kegs
- Co2 tank
- Gas management board or regulator

Step 8 – Enjoy!

That's all there is to it – now connect up your kegs and enjoy a well earned beer!

I hope this guide will encourage some of you to take the plunge and build your own bar – if you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to get in touch.



