

ELLE DECOR

cheers!

home
for the
holidays



Bruce Bananto and Alexa Hampton with bar cabinets by Armani/Casa, left, and Oscar de la Renta for Century Furniture. See Resources.

The 10 Most Brilliant Bar Cabinets

Alexa Hampton and Bruce Bananto toast these cocktail-hour essentials. Chin-chin!

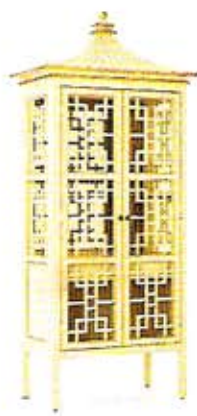
Text by Mitchell Owens · Photography by William A. Boyd Jr.
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As you raise a glass of good cheer this holiday season, give silent thanks to Franklin D. Roosevelt. The 32nd president's repeal of Prohibition in 1933 gave stylish hosts the impetus to tipple in the open—and to invest in glamorous bar cabinets that could house their hooch in suitable splendor. Though Roosevelt called for a cold beer after he signed the 21st Amendment, he preferred martinis—made of three parts gin to one part vermouth and garnished with a single olive.

Modern-minded architectural designer Bruce Bananto, who appreciates a good frozen margarita almost as much as he does the tailored

lines of fine 1950s furniture, fully understands the form's allure. Just opening its doors is "a symbol of celebration," says Bananto, who also admires its built-in storage.

For the spirited traditionalist Alexa Hampton ("I'm a red-wine gal but am in a whiskey-sour frame of mind these days"), the signal joy of a bar cabinet isn't the libations. It is the opportunity to pack its nooks and crannies with "glittering, shining things—corkscrews and cocktail shakers and every sort of accoutrement you can imagine." As the interior designer explains, "You want it to be about sybaritic fun." ▶



1 BAR CABINET BY OSCAR DE LA RENTA FOR CENTURY FURNITURE

"Very playful," says Alexa Hampton of this chinoiserie delight. "Trelliswork is so de rigueur now." In addition to the deep shelves and easy-wipe glass-and-mirror interior, she points out that the open panels allow for personal style. "You could back them with fabric or mirror for added oomph."

Width: 36"; height: 84"; depth: 20"; material: hardwood solids and veneers in chalk-white (other finishes available) with glass shelves, antiqued-mirror back, and interior lights; delivery: 6-8 weeks; price: \$10,788



2 RIESLING BAR UNIT BY ARMANI/CASA

"This one is a favorite," Bruce Bananto announces. "The materials are nicely matched, the doors fold back, and there's a great deal of thoughtfulness"—the interior is padded with a waterproof fabric that looks like silk. The minimalist, open metal base is ideal for displaying "a stack of lacquered boxes" or a large Chinese vase. "You can put your own stamp on it."

Width: 28"; height: 59"; depth: 18"; material: beech in black-ocher finish (other materials and finishes available) with waterproof-fabric lining and bronzed-brass base; delivery: 16-18 weeks; price: \$17,030



3 HYANNIS PORT BAR SECRETAIRE BY ERIC JOURDAN FOR LIGNE ROSSET

"The ebonized oak is handsome," Hampton says. "The curved back is great—and it's finished, so you could stand it in the middle of a room as a divider." She also admires its capacious storage and nonbar countenance. "Sometimes you just want a bar not to call too much attention to itself."

Width: 31"; height: 59"; depth: 19"; material: oak veneer in ebony finish (other materials and finishes available) with polished-chrome base and hardware; delivery: 2-3 weeks; price: \$3,130



4 KIOSK BUTLER'S CABINET FROM THE BILL SOFIELD COLLECTION BY BAKER

"It's the perfect scale for a small apartment," Hampton observes. "For something so diminutive, it has a terrific amount of space for glasses and bottles. The integral serving trays are adorable, and the gold finish is beautiful. I also love its cute knobby knees."

Width: 29"; height: 50.5"; depth: 18"; material: maple solids and veneers in basalt finish with lacquered doors, mirrored interior, wood serving trays, and bronze hardware; delivery: 6-8 weeks; price: \$8,736



5 LARKSPUR BAR CABINET BY MARTHA STEWART FURNITURE FOR BERNHARDT

"All of Martha Stewart's designs are tasteful and intelligent," Bananto avers. "The felt liner is excellent, and the mirrored pullout counter is nice." He is further taken with the gleaming door handles that seamlessly blend into the inlaid nickel ornamentation.

"It's a simple touch that gives this cabinet real integrity." Width: 42"; height: 59"; depth: 23"; material: primavera veneers in sable finish with mirrored interior and polished-nickel hardware; delivery: immediate; price: \$1,595



6 KNOWLEDGE BAR CABINET BY KINDEL FURNITURE CO.

"Sight lines are important in a room, so it's good to have a bar that you can hang a picture over," Hampton notes. "Plus, I'm a stickler for construction and always happy when the joints are solid and carefully fitted. It's simple but not plain, and the finish is sexy-elegant."

Width: 32"; height: 50"; depth: 22"; material: cherry solids and veneers in currant finish on the cabinet and champagne finish on the base (other finishes available) with top and shelves of polyresin, and brushed-bronze hardware; delivery: 4-6 weeks; price: \$7,062



7 ST. GERMAIN MODULAR CABINET BY JIUN HO FROM DENNIS MILLER ASSOC.

Bananto is struck by the fine details, stating that the "lack of visible hardware gives it a clean look." He also approves of the drop front's faux-parchment panel ("very convincing") and the top-mounted wood serving tray ("it's pretty on its own").

The adjustable storage units get a thumbs-up too. Width: 32.5"; height: 41"; depth: 18"; material: maple with faux-parchment finish on door (other materials and finishes available); delivery: 16 weeks; price: \$8,992



8 NADIA BUFFET BY MITCHELL GOLD + BOB WILLIAMS

"It hits that sweet spot of heights—not too tall, not too short. It won't dominate a room," Hampton says. "It's also not too deep, so it doesn't seem bulky. The subtle directional wood grain on the doors is attractive and a fine addition to the design. It's sturdy as well, which is a quality you want from a bar cabinet, because you're loading it with liquor and wine."

Width: 40"; height: 56.5"; depth: 20"; material: parawood solids and mahogany veneers in coco finish; delivery: immediate; price: \$1,535



9 LUMINÉ BAR CABINET BY THOMASVILLE

"It's dark on the outside, but when you open the doors, it's all white and mirror, which gives it a fresh feeling," Bananto reports, plainly pleased. "You could probably store a dozen goblets on the metal hanging racks. And I like the backlit acrylic panel inside a lot. It always helps when you can see what you're mixing."

Width: 43"; height: 71"; depth: 23"; material: walnut and hardwood solids in eclipse finish on the exterior and pearl finish on the interior with glass-storage racks, nickel-plate hardware, and backlit interior panel; delivery: 4-6 weeks; price: \$3,869



10 LIPP TALL CABINET BY JULIAN CHICHESTER

"This is superfun!" Hampton exclaims, tracing the liplike carvings that add a Magritte-surreal touch. "It's contemporary, but the design is a traditional cabinet-on-stand. It's also big enough to anchor a room and make a statement. And the exaggerated grain of the doors is a striking contrast to the smooth sides."

Width: 51"; height: 68"; depth: 23.5"; material: oak (also available in black fruitwood) with patinated-metal base and aged-brass hardware; delivery: 12 weeks; price: \$5,395

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