



WE ASKED

We Asked 12 Bartenders: What Bottle Is a ‘Green Flag’ When You See It at a Bar? (2025)

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You can never be 100 percent sure what you’ll get when you walk into a bar. Even if a spot boasts a list of accolades, the hospitality might fall flat or a drink that looks great on social media may not live up to the hype. Those are red flags for sure, but luckily there are green flags you can look out for as well that will hint you’re in for a good time.

Whether you’re exploring dive bars in a different part of town or cocktail bars in a new city, you can tell everything you need to know about a place by scanning the back bar. Check out some of the brands they’re stocking and the lineup will quickly reveal if a place is worth its salt — as long as you know what to look for.



We asked 12 bartenders from across the country what bottle instantly signals they should get comfortable and settle in for a couple of rounds.

“My green flag is Amaro Nonino. I’m a big amaro guy in general, but seeing Nonino on a back bar always feels like a great sign. It goes a step beyond the usual Fernet-Branca ‘industry nod’ and tells me the team cares about their amaro selection and understands how to use it. It’s a delicious amaro on its own, but more importantly, it signals that the bar probably executes classic cocktails properly and with the right ingredients — especially something as spec-sensitive as a Paper Plane. If they’ve got Nonino stocked, chances are they know

what they're doing behind the bar." —Derek Stilmann, owner, Bar Kaiju, Miami