Joe’s Basement Pub

Design, process and savings Manual

Introduction

Thank you for purchasing the Joe’s Basement Pub DIY Manual. Based on your commitment it’s fair to assume you are about to embark on a journey to creating a space in your home that transports you to your “happy place!”

Three years ago, I embarked on that same journey. For me, it was the look and feel of an Irish Pub. I’m not Irish, I don’t pretend to be. For me, the surroundings of dark woods, green overtones and a long, inviting bar is a place of bliss. It reminds me of so many good times that it had to be created at home.

So without question, I had to create an authentic Irish Pub. Here are the top 10 reasons to build your own bar in the basement:

10. If you screw something up, no one has to know!
9. Its best to be on the lowest level when you’ve had too much to drink.
8. You don’t have to look at the construction site every day
7. It’s the one area men have the best chance of controlling in their home.
6. Expectations are low when you say you put a bar in the basement
5. You can control light so a projector is not only cost effective, it’s effective.
4. Easy to hide in there.
3. Kids are afraid of basements.
2. Neighbors can get rowdy, your china is safe.
1. You only live once!!!!

So convinced you need to spice up the cellar? Now let’s talk about the cabbage. You know, the cash… the budget. I tracked and spent $8500 for my Irish Pub. That includes the all the hardware, wood, a/v equipment and even the Golden Tee arcade game. This manual will focus on two things. 1) Making sure you transform your basement into that perfect space. 2) Making it cost effective.

So before you read on, pour a glass of your favorite beverage. Sit back, relax and let’s get creative.

Selling the effect
To be transformed from your home, you need to sell the effect so the senses get lost in your space.

I’ve seen plenty of basement bars in my past and most make the same mistakes. I’m a fan of lists, so here is my list of most common mistakes:

1. Carpet – have you ever been to a bar and said “Wow, love the shag carpet!”
2. Low white ceiling – again, not a compliment I’ve ever mentioned to the bartender.
3. Hand-me-down big poofy nasty plaid couches. The basement bar is not a Goodwill donation center.
4. Something is out of place. I describe this one below.

**Something is out of place.** If you are selling the effect of a particular style bar then you have to be careful about the décor. For instance, if I did a big silver-framed LCD flatscreen on the wall…. I just lost the effect. When do you see metallic silver in an Irish Pub? It just turned into that cheesy bar down the street that calls itself Irish because they sell the O’Patty melt. If you’re a fan of the tiki bar, then keep with the theme. Don’t put up nice, classy hanging pendants. Do your research. Go bar hopping on a mission! If you’re careful, people will forget they’re in a house. That’s what you want. That’s what I hear all the time. The best compliment I ever received was “it’s like someone took a house and placed it on top of an Irish Pub.” That’s the goal. Let’s keep it in budget, but that’s the goal.

If you’re like me, you’ve been thinking about this space for a long time. Probably have had plenty coffee brainstorms standing in your basement playing it all out in your head. Great! We think alike. Let’s get those thoughts on paper and get a budget in place.

Included with this manual is a pub cost estimator. It goes into excruciating detail on what is needed to build a similar-designed pub like Joe’s Basement Pub. You’ll likely deviate from it and even find better ways to do some things. It’s a great start to help build the budget and this manual will help save plenty of cash in the process.

**DISCLAIMER:**

Treat this manual as an idea guide only. The processes and steps described in this manual are the ones I used and don’t necessarily reflect those approved by your local codes. You should
always consider consulting with an expert when making renovations to your home. Check with local codes before beginning construction and obtain all necessary permits. In other words, I am not responsible for anything other than getting those creative juices flowing!

THE ORDER

The sections aren’t always lined up in order so here is a listing in order of how it was implemented:

Framing

Electrical and Audio/Visual wiring

Spray paint ceiling

Drywall

Lighting

Install A/V equipment including projector

Paint upper portion of walls (in my case Chlorophyll green)

Paint theater screen with special paint described in this manual

Wainscot (do not trim at this stage – plenty of instruction later in the manual)

Build and install built in shelving (wine rack as well)

Install DRIcore subfloor

Build and install support beam pub table

Build Bar and back bar

Trim wainscot

Install wood flooring

TOOLS LIST

Framing nailer
X nailer
Air compressor
Table saw or radial arm saw
Circular saw
Hammer
Rubber mallet
Caulk gun
Level (can measure plum as well)
Plum bob
Drill/Power screw driver
Bore saw (for drilling large circle holes)
Miter saw (if table/radial arm saw can’t do miters)
Jig saw
Drywall knife
Box cutter
Drywall spatula
Wire cutter/stripper
Voltage tester
Paint roller

THE FLOOR
I was concerned about putting too much money into the floor of the pub based on it being in the basement. I don’t expect the floor to get wet, but you never know.

The first concern when putting a wood floor down in the basement is mold. After a lot of research, the best way to avoid mold was to put a floating floor down (let’s hope it never actually has to “float”). I used DRlcore subfloor 2x2 panels which is basically a subfloor panel with polyethylene cleats. This keeps the wood off the concrete surface and allows airflow under the floor. At the time of this publication, a 2x2 panel cost $6.78. Not only does the DRlcore floor help prevent mold, it also gives the basement a cozy feel and softens the impact of walking. The DRlcore solution is very easy to install.

**MATERIALS**

Mallet

2x4 block about a foot long

Level

Circular or table saw (even a jigsaw could work)

Healthy back

It only took a day to cover the floor of the pub. They do a good job describing the process and estimating quantity. Their website is www.dricore.com .

After installing the floating floor, I added a thin layer of padding to help with the cushion and sound of walking on the wood floor.

Once you have a floating floor installed, it’s time to put down the actual wood flooring. Going back to my comment on cost, I didn’t want to pour 3-4K on flooring if there was a chance it could get damaged and frankly my budget wouldn’t support it.

I love the look of plank flooring especially for an Irish Pub. I think for most bars, plank floor will match most styles and the variation can be in the stain. I went with a 6” wide plank size but you can also do 8”. Since you have the thickness of the DRlcore floor down, all that’s really needed is ¼” oak plywood for the surface. Yep, you read that right. I used 4x8 sheets of ¼” oak
plywood. A router was used with a 1/8” bit to score lines in the sheet to get the plank appearance. I used black screws to give the effect of screwing down the plank floor. You could also go with old-style nails. The diagram below shows the scoring done by the router and placement of screws.

To get the straight lines, I used a ¾” 4x8 sheet and placed pieces of tape to mark where the ¾” sheet goes for each line to be cut. Based on the location of the ¾” sheet and the width from center to edge of router you’ll get a nice straight consistent line.

You can rip out plank lines for the entire floor in one day. No, it’s not fun but it saves a ton of money and looks fantastic. It has also weathered four years of consistent and bountiful use and cost less than $300.

Once the lines have been scored, do the usual 100/150/220 sanding. I decided to install the flooring prior to staining and polyurethane (Red Mahogany/Satin finish) to better cover the seams between sheets. To apply the stain, I used an applicator with a broom handle to save the back a little. It didn’t work on the Poly so that was done on hands and knees (did I mention knee pads were a good investment?).
To put the final touches on, I used drywall screws to secure it and add the look of planks.

The Walls

I went with wainscot for the bottom portion of the wall with a green paint for the upper half. I like the look of boxes in the wainscot instead of bead board. It requires a good bit of trim so making the trim yourself will save plenty of dough.

This manual doesn’t attempt to understand the specific building codes in your area. Make sure you know the codes and even have it inspected to be sure. Moisture is your worst enemy and there are great products out there to ensure your basement is dry. I strongly suggest you take every precaution necessary.

I won’t discuss the method of building stud walls and electrical wiring as there is plenty of resources available that do a fine job. The same goes for drywall.

If I did it over again, I would have hired someone to frame and drywall for me. I burned a lot of time doing it and experts can have it done in a weekend. I liked doing the electrical wiring however you could outsource that as well.

Once the framing and drywall is complete as well as the electrical wiring, you’re ready to continue the theme. I chose a green color called “chlorophyll”. It’s a little brighter than Irish Moss and reflects a little more light. You can get a little crazy painting when you know the lower portion will be covered by wainscot and the upper portion crown molding. So a roller is all you’ll need. I started with a special primer for new construction to give a good base before applying the green paint. Two coats of primer and three coats of “Chlorophyll” eggshell finish.

Go to the section on theater screen if you are installing one. You’ll need to perform that step before painting.
The wainscot consists of ¼ oak plywood for the base and ¾” oak plywood for trim. I also purchased store-bought cap and cove molding to cover the layers of plywood. I first cut 4x8 sheets of ¾” oak plywood in half so I end up with two 4x4 sheets with the grain running vertically. I sanded each with 100/150/220 grits respectively and stained them before applying to the wall. I chose a semi-gloss polyurethane and applied three coats. Refer to the sanding & staining process in appendix A for more detail. I attached the sheets to the wall using an adhesive on the back and screws along the seams.

To make the trim, I cut 3” and 5” strips out of 4x8 sheets of ¾” oak plywood. You can use the estimator to determine the approximate number of strips that will be needed. You get major savings doing it this way and of course it’s more rewarding. Once the strips were cut, I SSP’d them before cutting to exact size for the wainscot. The trim covers the vertical seam between each 4x4 as well as the chair rail. The 5” wide trim was used for the baseboard. I used the cap molding to cover the top portion of the chair rail. The cove molding went inside each box and was cut using a miter saw. Again, I SSP’d the store-bought trim prior to installation as well.

I used a similar process for the crown molding only taking a router to it for a decorative bottom.

**Ceiling**

Have you ever been in a basement where the ceiling seemed to low when finished? Drop ceilings can take a few inches off the height and it seems a bit more closed in. If you drywall the ceiling, you run the risk of needing to get what’s behind it…. and that’s no fun! I decided to rent a sprayer and paint the ceiling with a flat black finish. The only way the effect works is to have all lighting shining down. So I used track lighting, pendent lighting as well as canned lighting. No lights shine up towards the ceiling so you in fact “lose” the ceiling. It’s much like the industrial look you see in restaurants and bars.

First you have to close off any areas you don’t want the paint affecting. I wrapped the smoke detector, ceiling vents and stapled plastic to the open walls that lead to another part of the basement. I rented a paint sprayer to apply the black paint. Four hours and 6 cans later, the ceiling was complete. Kinda like pushing the EASY button! Certainly a cost saver as well.

You may need to touch up after a couple weeks due to your house shifting. Some pipes move over time. I just grabbed a flat black spray can and touched up where needed.
The Bar

It’s mind-boggling how much bars cost if you don’t make them yourself. You could spend $5000 on an 8 ft. bar alone. My bar is 12 feet long, 2 ½ feet wide and cost about $600 to build. It gets plenty of compliments and there are only a few things I would have done differently.

There are several sites online that offer bar plans. Feel free to browse those however all you really need to do is research some of your favorite establishments and look to see how they did theirs. When you peel the onion back, the bar is basically a box with shelves. It’s the “lipstick on a pig” that separates the good from the bad. Here is a picture of the frame build:

The bar is made up of 3 4ft sections as the base. Using 2x4’s I built the frame as seen in the picture below.

Using 2x4’s you can build braces to hold as many shelves as you want as well as space for a sink, refrigerator or kegerator (or all three). Once the frame is built, it’s time to cover the sides of the bar with ¼ inch oak plywood. I used the same stain as the walls and floor so it all works together. If you ran the grain north/south like the walls, you will have a few seams to deal with. To cover these, I went to the local hardware store and picked up nice large stair balusters. I cut
one in half for the two middle seams and notched a ¼ chunk out of four others to cover the corners. I used store-bought decorative base molding and some decorative plates for each section created by the balusters. You can see detail in the picture below.

The top of the bar consists of (2) ¾” sheets stacked on top of each other with one being wider than the other. The width difference provides a drip tray collection area on the bar serving side and a support ledge for the arm rail on the “patron” side of the bar. I went with oak ply on the bottom layer and birch Ply on top. The Birch gave a nice marbly look. Oak has a tendency to be grainy but it’s up to you which finish you like. To finish off the drip area, I cut a small strip out of ¾” birch to hold items in the drip area. The diagram below demonstrates the concept of varying widths.

The two most important accents that really made the bar are the arm rail and brass foot rail. I had to look a little farther than the local hardware store to find both. I wanted a good, comfortable arm rail that engulfs your forearms allowing for hours of bar enjoyment. I found the arm rail at www.imperialproductions.com. You can get lost in all the cool stuff they have. Stay focused and find the bar rails. You can leverage the “name search” and use “bar rail” as the search input. The bar rail is sweet. They provide a good diagram for installation and it will be important as you construct the top surface of the bar. The foot rail can be purchased through Kegworks. I have a link to their site on www.joesbasementpub.com. They have nice tools to determine all the components you will need to have a proper installation. I used rope lighting to line the underside of the “patron” side which gives the seating, front, and brass rail a nice glow.
If you are doing a built-in kegerator as I did, then complete the top of the bar first, after that, bore a hole large enough to either use the tower that comes with your kegerator or just the right size to fit the beer line up to a beer tower. Beer towers can be found at Kegworks as well and I suggest you look there for tower ideas before constructing your bar as it could change how you approach it. My kegerator vents in the back so I drilled a series of holes in the lower portion of the patron side to help with the ventilation. I also raised the kegerator off the bar bottom by an inch to allow for air flow.

I painted the inside of the bar flat black because you can see it through the mirrors of the back bar. I may install sliding doors and lighten it up a bit behind the bar.

The floor behind the bar is just DRIcore with no wood accent. I painted it flat black and sealed it with a couple coats of poly. You may want to add caulkting between the base of the bar and the back bar if there is a chance of spilling liquids.
What I would have done differently:

Pay attention to this one. I would have installed plumbing and drainage to the bar area. I didn’t and therefore couldn’t put a sink in under the bar or even on the back bar. I have to go behind the back bar to get to a sink which is okay but would rather have done it the right way.

I built the frame into 3 sections as mentioned before. This would enable me to relocate the bar if I ever moved. The top was made of an 8 ft sheet and 4 ft sheet to cover 12 feet. I placed the seam in the same location as the seam for the frame so shifting can cause the top seam some stress and any gap filler used to cover the seam can crack. I should have either done two 6 ft sections or just buy one 12 foot piece of birch for the very top of the bar. Just remember to stagger your seams. Hey, I never said I was an expert!

Back Bar

I struggled with the back bar. I didn’t have a great deal of confidence in building this one. Building shelves is one thing but draws and cabinets are another. I also had a location dilemma with the width of it. The portion of the basement where the actual bar and back bar are located has a cove area about 8 ft. deep. The back bar needed to go in that area but I didn’t want to put it all the way in the back as that would be too much space between the bar and back bar. If I move it up, then the back bar would need an access door to the unused space (or I could forget about the space but that’s wasteful). Hang with me on this one. It gets better. If I put an access door in, then the back bar isn’t that wide and starts to look like one of those average basement “bars”.

I wanted to use an unfinished cabinet for the middle lower portion and full height shelves for each side of the back bar with a mirror in the middle. Here is a diagram below:

The BIG problem was that design would span the entire opening to the cove. So I would either have to eliminate one full height shelf and put a door there or waste 45 sq. feet. I need a drum role for this one…………

So, I was on a plane heading from the north down to Dallas, TX for work. If you are still doing the drum role, keep going. Using two cocktail napkins, and a cocktail, I wondered if one of the shelves could double as a door. Okay, drum role is done. Thanks for rocking that out with me!
Why the cocktail napkins? Well, they prevent condensation from getting on the tray table of course. Oh, I also used them to figure out how to swing the shelf and in what direction so that the back bar could span the entire space and the shelf can swing back behind without scraping the wall.

The diagram has been modified to demonstrate the shelf door. Its Batman meets Irish Pub! See diagram below:

If you didn’t think that was cool, then you may as well stop reading. That was the climax!

I started the build with a storage cabinet that has two large sections with four doors and three drawers at the top. The cabinet was unfinished and needed a top piece. I used ¾ inch birch like the bar to maintain consistency. I ran three 2x4’s up the back side long enough to support a sheet of ¾ oak ply and the mirror on top. I notched the back support two feet up across the width of the support in order to install another shelf. The mirror was ordered in two pieces. One for the lower portion and one for the top. The shelf and cap are supported by table legs and decorative bases from the local hardware store. I purchased crown molding for the cap. Two holes were bored out in the cap and shelf to install under-cabinet lighting. Supporting diagram below:
The full length shelves on each side where made out of \( \frac{3}{4} \) inch birch. For each shelf, I cut two 8 ft x 1 ft sheets to use as the sides. I cut 4 shelves out of the same material and marked where they would go. I notched guides for each shelf on the side supports and made sure they matched up to each other. The notches are made using a router with X bit and went half way through the material. Once all notches were created, I sanded all pieces. I glued and nailed the shelves in place and then installed the backing. I bored out holes where more cabinet lighting would be installed. I added crown to each shelf to match the center piece. Since I used plywood, I needed to add decorative molding to frame it out. You could also buy faux wood tape-like strips which would be even more cost effective. The entire back bar was then stained and polyurethane applied.

If you notice, the bottom shelf is not all the way to the ground. I left some space to install casters (wheels) for the right shelf and did the same for the left without the casters. I also installed two solid hinges so the shelf can “roll” backward and on a pivot attached to the back bar center. Cool right?!!!

I went shopping online for bottle shelves. I wanted something classy that had some under-lighting for the bottles. The prices were insane! Naturally I said I could build it myself. It’s a pretty simple design. I wanted two shelves so built “stairs” basically with rope lighting inside. I used Plexiglas pieces cut to fit each tier. I purchased a role of glass film and applied several
layers to get a dulled down light affect. Same stain and molding as the other parts of the back bar. I saved at least $200 doing it myself.

**WIWHDD** (it was time to acronym that one)

Nothing. I’m very happy with how it turned out.

**Theater Screen**

If you haven’t priced out projection theater screens, you should. That’s when you realize it’s WAY TOO EXPENSIVE. They also stretch out over time. I found a product called “Theater Goo”. Their website is [www.gooscreen.com](http://www.gooscreen.com). They will match your projector with the right base and top coats. The paint contains crystals similar to the expensive screens you can buy. Painting it on is very simple and they provide plenty of instruction to help.

To determine size, install your projector first and mark the border of the image. I trimmed the “frame” of the screen so it is distinct and still has a classy look to it. I used pre-build decorative trim. See up close picture below:

**WIWHDD**

I love the Theater Goo. The image looks great from the HD projector. I’m not sure if going a wide-screen config would be better. It may be. I didn’t want it taking over the wall, but movies would look a lot better.

**Wine Rack**

The wine rack basics are the same as the shelves for the back bar. No cabinet lighting however. I also added a middle support for every-other shelf as the bottles are heavy. Using the same material, I cut dividers that would just slide in at an angle to create separate wine bottle spaces. The ends of the dividers were tapered to allow for a tight angle fit. I used the same decorative molding as the back bar. Diagram below:
Support beam pub table

Props to my wife for this one (yes, she was intimately involved in the building of this Irish paradise… and she’s awesome, beautiful and smart). No other way to say it… if you’re finishing your basement, support beams suck. Here’s a great solution to that annoyance.

We purchased a premade unfinished ¾ inch thick round piece of oak that will serve as the table top. I built a frame that would support the table top starting at the bottom and working its way up. I used metal brackets to hold the table in place and extra support is what you will definitely need. Why? Well, you have to cut the table in half first. Actually you have to bore a hole, and then cut it in half.

I found the exact center and bored a hold that is as close to the diameter of the support beam. I then cut the table top in half making sure it’s a very fine cut. Using L-brackets, I put each side back onto the table support and connected both pieces with metal brackets as well. It worked very well. The diagram and pictures help detailing the construction.
**Beer Table**

I've received a lot of questions regarding the beer table and how it was made. First I'll start with why it was built in the first place. A couple times a year, I pack the house for parties. I needed a place for people to sit without taking up too much room. The beer table is perfect for the job.

The table is made up of 2x4’s stacked together such that they sit on their side and attached with screws and glue. The diagram below shows how the table is put together. Pay close attention to the leveling of the table. Most of the work done on the pub didn't require serious, meticulous measuring. This one does.

Each leg is two 2x4’s screwed and glued together.

To attach legs, I made the first two and last two 2x4’s for the top shorter than the remaining 2x4’s such that the legs can be flush with the top of the table and therefore more sturdy. You can then screw and glue the legs into the top of the table. I used another 2x4 to connect the two legs for each end.

I used various tools and objects to beat the heck out of the top giving it and old world look. I then sanded, stained and added a satin polyurethane.

The legs were purchased from a store. They were originally designed to be plant stands and cost only $17 each. Getting creative saves money!
**Front Door**

I saw a cool front entrance door at Home Depot that looked really cool. It had a medieval look to it. The cost was way too much for a basement bar so I worked on recreating it with less expensive materialist.

I started with a standard unfinished inexpensive door. It was plain with no windows or decorative trim. In order to get some depth to it and enable some creativity I needed to add a 1/4" oak plywood sheet to cover the "outside" view of the door.

I cut out a rectangle at the top and bottom areas of the oak plywood facing. This gives me an area to add planks inside it giving a good look. I then nailed the plywood sheet to the door. The planks I installed inside were purchased and their size dictated the size of the rectangles so I would have to make as many cuts.

I purchased the iron accents from [www.wildwesthardware.com](http://www.wildwesthardware.com). They really give the door character. The handle was purchased at Home Depot.

I stained the door using the same stain as the rest of the pub. The inside door view is just stained with no accents.

I plan to work on the "outside" of the pub this year so it looks like a real pub from the outside as well. There are also plans to add a wine cellar to the pub. I'll be sure to take more pictures and document it as best as possible.

**Final miscellaneous notes:**

Consider using IR extenders for all electronics. This enables you to hide the electronics somewhere (mine are in storage area) and all IR signals from the remote can be collected in one spot and broadcasted to all of your electronics. I think it's a must. [www.smarthome.com](http://www.smarthome.com) has plenty of solutions for IR repeaters.

Think through the entire construction several times before starting. I've tried my best to note the gotchas but I'm sure there are plenty of others out there. Consider using a software program to design the space first before construction. I changed some decisions after leveraging a tool to design it. The bar was going to be L snapped but when mapped out didn't make sense.

I hope you found this document to be helpful and the creative juices are flowing. Even without experience, you can generate an awesome space yourself and save a ton of money! Please share your pictures with me and I'll post the good ones on the site. Feel free to use the
guestbook to ask questions or email me directly at joe@joesbasementpub.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Oh, and so "why buy Joe a beer?". You may have seen this option on the website at joesbasementpub.com. Instead of charging for a manual, I figured I would test humanity. If you found it helpful, then consider buying me a beer or two. It goes towards keeping the site up and time invested.

Good luck!