

Women Are Raising the Bar

As women take over bars in hotels, there is an all-new storytelling session happening in the glass.

By Bindu Gopal Rao



The team of women at the bar at Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park



Samim Bano, Chidya Ghar Bar, Roseate House, New Delhi

“There was no discrimination between male and female bartenders. I felt encouraged to train harder, to experiment, and to take ownership of the bar during busy shifts.”

- Samim Bano

A relatively new trend is the presence of women bartenders and mixologists in hotel bars, once believed to be the domain of men. This trend is not just about women claiming their space but also about overcoming odds to come out trumps.

Testing Waters

For women to enter the bar and make it their own has not been a simple journey. They have been tested and have had to work harder to prove their mettle. “When I first stepped behind

the bar at Chidya Ghar Bar in Roseate House, it did feel like I was being tested. The standards at the hotel are high, and the guests really understand their drinks, so everyone is observed closely. For me, I felt I had to prove my skills from day one. That’s also what makes working here special. Once you show consistency and professionalism, you’re respected for your craft,” says Samim Bano, Cast Member Mixologist, Chidya Ghar Bar, Roseate House, New Delhi.

In an industry long dominated by men, hotels are making space for women, and rightfully so. Bano explains that the



Chidya Ghar Bar at Roseate House, New Delhi

“Claiming my space wasn’t about saying anything loudly—it was about showing up every day, handling the pressure, and doing my job well.”

- Sonali Wangkheimayum



Athihrii Maniziini, mixologist at ZLB23 at The Leela Palace Bengaluru



Sonali Wangkheimayum, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park

Roseate Hotels & Resorts gave her the platform to shine. “There was no discrimination between male and female bartenders. In fact, I felt encouraged even more to train harder, experiment, and take ownership of the bar during busy shifts. For me, claiming my space wasn’t about competing with men. It was about focusing on growing in an environment that truly supports talent, regardless of gender.”

Gender Bender

Working in hospitality, especially at the bar, for women is also about working harder in comparison to their male counterparts. At Double Up, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park, the pace can get intense, especially during corporate evenings and weekend rushes. “For me, claiming my space wasn’t about saying anything loudly—it was about showing up every day, handling the pressure, and doing my job well. Once people see you can manage the bar confidently, that’s when you earn your place,” says Sonali Wangkheimayum, F&B Associate, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park.

She admits that she has had to push herself to stay sharp, knowing the menu, understanding guest preferences, and being consistent. “When guests at Double Up start asking for you again, that’s when you feel validated. There was a busy evening at Double Up when a guest ordered a cocktail I hadn’t made before, and the bar was already packed. For a second, I felt stuck. But I didn’t show it. I clarified the order, quickly checked the details, and made sure it was served properly. That moment reminded me that staying composed is important, no matter what’s happening around you.”



Kir Royale at Chidya Ghar Bar at Roseate House, New Delhi



Moscow Mule at Chidya Ghar Bar at Roseate House, New Delhi



The Idealist at Chidya Ghar Bar at Roseate House, New Delhi

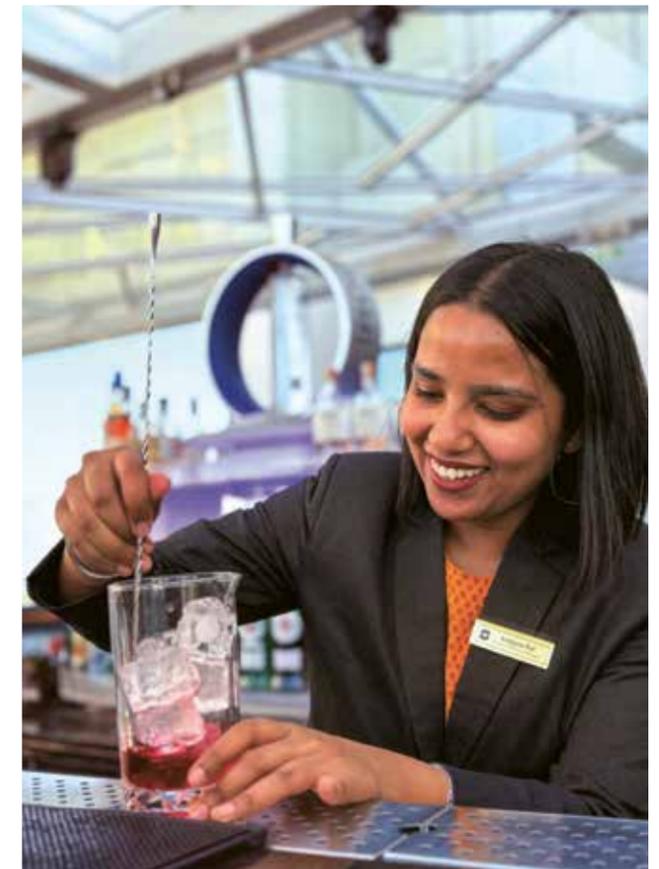
Owning the scene

What is working for women is that they speak clearly, make eye contact, and stay composed under pressure. Guests observe leadership in action during a busy service, and this augurs well for them too.

Athihrii Maniziini, mixologist at ZLB23 at The Leela Palace

“Women often bring emotional intelligence into service. My cocktails are not just about balance of flavours; they’re about storytelling and experience.”

- Sanjana Pol



Sanjana Pol, HYPE, Shangri-La Bengaluru



A collection of cocktails at at Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park

Bengaluru, says, “I’ve been fortunate to work in a team that is extremely supportive and professional. Respect here comes from how you show up every day, your preparation, your composure, and your commitment to the craft. Both my male and female colleagues have been encouraging, and that collaborative environment makes a big difference, especially early in your career. At The Leela, there is a strong culture of mentorship and mutual respect, which gives you the confidence to grow and take ownership of your journey.” She adds that The Leela’s training ecosystem played an important role in that journey. “Continuous learning, mentorship, and leadership development helped me build credibility over time. As guests began to trust my recommendations and return for the experience, that initial pressure was replaced by confidence and a sense of belonging.”

Challenges and More

As working women in the bar, women have faced challenges, especially when it comes to handling disrespectful behaviour from guests while still maintaining professionalism. “There have been moments when guests crossed lines, verbally or behaviourally. As a woman in hospitality, that’s a reality. What it taught me is that resilience isn’t silence. It’s knowing when to stay composed and when to assert boundaries professionally. Strength can be calm and firm at the same time,” says Sanjana Pol, Assistant Restaurant Manager, HYPE, Shangri-La Bengaluru.

She emphasises presence and clarity as traits that have held her in good stead. “Stand straight. Speak clearly. Know your numbers—GP%, stock variance, and menu logic. When you understand both the art and the business of the bar, people stop underestimating you. Sometimes guests ask for a ‘senior’ or assume a male colleague is the manager. Instead of reacting emotionally, I let my service answer for me. After one perfect cocktail and a confident conversation, perceptions change very quickly.”

A Woman’s Touch

Being behind the bar has also meant that women have been able to shape the way they create, serve, and connect through cocktails. Women are able to clearly focus on balanced aroma, texture, presentation, and storytelling while making the experience emotional and memorable. “I think women often bring emotional intelligence into service. I observe more body language, mood shifts, and subtle preferences. My cocktails are not just about balance of flavours; they’re about storytelling and experience,” says Pol.

Women can also bring empathy and intuition to every interaction. Understanding that bartending isn’t just about technique, it’s about reading a room, sensing what a guest needs before they ask, and creating moments that feel personal and memorable for them. “At ZLB23, we focus deeply on detail and guest connection. Whether it’s the balance of flavors, the temperature of the glass, or the timing of service, every element contributes to the overall experience. I approach each cocktail with the intention of creating something thoughtful and memorable for the guest,” avers Maniziini.

Looking Ahead

This craft needs perspective, creativity, and voice, and women are ensuring they work on all these aspects as they set the standards in the space. “Do not let your fear decide the future. Bartending is not about gender; it’s about skill, confidence, and passion,” says Bano. Working at the bar means long shifts, standing for hours, and constantly being ‘on.’ Also, it is the small details that need to be observed. Like, for instance, women pay attention to small details, like how a guest reacts to the first sip and whether they prefer something stronger or lighter.

Wangkheimayum adds, “If you are considering taking a job in the bar, don’t let doubt stop you. Working at Double Up has taught me confidence and resilience. It’s not always easy, but it shapes you in ways you don’t expect. If you’re willing to learn and stay strong, it can be very rewarding.”

The bar needs more women, not to “fit in,” but to redefine what leadership behind the bar looks like. And that is exactly what one needs to raise a toast to. 