

## Robot Bartender Developed To Solve Help Shortage

By Larry Weekley Washington Post Staff Writer

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By Tom Kelley, Staff Photographer

**NEW BARTENDER**—Felix J. Coja operates the mechanical bartender at the Brickskeller Restaurant. The machine does the work of three or four mere mortals.

# Robot Bartender Developed To Solve Help Shortage

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The new bartender at the Brickskeller Restaurant, 1523 22d st. nw., is never late for work, never talks back to rude customers and never takes a drink on the job or off. Quick, silent and efficient is he.

This paragon is a robot—what else? And the new face behind the bar is a push-button console, rather than a mere human with a trusting smile and hairy arms.

Felix J. Coja, owner of the Brickskeller, built the robot in an effort to solve a labor shortage. Good human bartenders, Coja has learned, are hard to find.

Now he thinks his problem is solved, for instead of four human bartenders, Coja needs only one—plus the machine, plus a young man to help wash the glasses.

The robot mixes as many drinks in an evening as three or four bartenders could, Coja says.

Whiskey sour? Push a button. Daiquiri? Push another. Martini? Old Fashioned? Manhattan? All the human does is punch the correct button and the robot takes over.

From several shelves of bottles, each with an air-pressure suction tube in it, the electric machine sucks

up the proper ingredients in the proper amounts, pours them into a cup and even shakes them up, if that is called for by the programmed recipe.

Coja has invested several years and plenty of cash—about \$100,000, he insists—in developing the machine. Now he and a partner, Morris Bisker, a beer distributor, have formed a company called Beverage Controls, Inc., to build and market the machines.

Or they may sell the pending patents and their prototypes to a larger company. "We already have turned down a \$500,000 offer," Coja said.

The market for the machines may be large. Coja estimates the machines can be leased to bars for about \$180 a month. By replacing three bartenders who must be paid \$125 to \$150 a week each, bar owners could achieve large payroll savings.

Coja, a former engineer, decided to build a mechanical bartender himself after searching for two years to find one on the market.

"There wasn't anything available anywhere," he said. "So I built one. We are sure that it works and works efficiently. We're ready to go."