



WINE ETIQUETTE AND SERVICE

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

WINE ETIQUETTE AND SERVICE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, the candidate should be able to:

- Describe the factors involved in professional wine service, including set-up, glassware, opening a bottle, and order of service.
- Understand how temperature, decanting, and storage impact the perceived qualities of a wine.
- Recall the elements of best practices in food and wine pairing.
- Recognize how fat, salt, sweetness, acidity, and bitterness in foods impact the flavors of wine.
- Describe the key actions wine professionals can take to ensure the responsible service of alcohol.

A wine professional should always be conscious of his or her behavior in any social or business setting. All wine professionals should protect their reputation and that of the industry by consuming alcohol in moderation, and avoiding attitudes and behaviors such as arrogance, condescension, and public bashing of any wine or wine style. Wine, after all, is meant to be enjoyed and shared with others.

WINE SERVICE

The primary goals of wine service in the on-premise environment are to enhance the customer's experience by assisting with the selection and service of wine that delights the guest, enhances the food and occasion, and proves profitable for the establishment. In this regard,

knowledge of the various styles of wine made throughout the world and an understanding of food and wine pairing principles are essential. While the details of service and the level of formality will vary from establishment to establishment, solid knowledge and practiced skills in the procedures that follow should be part of every wine professional's repertoire.

The On-Premise/Restaurant Set-up

To prepare for service, it is necessary to gather the required tools and equipment in advance. The glassware should be free of soap and spots. This is particularly important for flutes, as a flute with soap residue will deaden the bubbles in a sparkling wine. After being washed, glassware should be rinsed or steamed with clean, hot water and polished free of streaks, residue, and fingerprints with a clean, dry, lint-free cloth. Handling the glassware by the stem will eliminate finger smudges.

Depending on the restaurant's policies and facilities, there are two different options for serving chilled wine—using a wine chiller that maintains the service temperature, or using an ice bucket to further chill a wine. When white or rosé wines are stored under refrigeration, it is best to ask the guests whether they prefer the wine served in an ice bucket or chiller. Chillers must be stored under refrigeration prior to service, and there needs to be sufficient storage space available. If ice buckets are used, they should be prepared in advance on busy nights by filling them two-thirds full with ice. When needed, water should be added to the bucket. The ice and water combination chills wine more quickly than ice alone. Serviettes (napkins, towels, or small linens) should be neatly folded and ready to be placed on top of each bucket to wipe the bottles after they have been submerged.

Sufficient quantities of each wine offered on the list should be available and accessible to supply the day's needs. Reds should be served at cool room temperature; whites and rosés should be chilled. Note, however, that some people prefer high-acid reds such as Beaujolais, Barbera, and Chianti to be slightly chilled as well.

As mentioned in the section on setting up a wine tasting, the suggested serving temperature ranges are as follows:

WINE STYLE/TEMPERATURE
Sweet white wines: 43°F–47°F (6°C–8°C)
Dry Sherry: 43°F–47°F (6°C–8°C)
Sparkling wines: 43°F–50°F (6°C–10°C)
Light white wines and rosés: 45°F–50°F (7°C–10°C)
Medium- to full-bodied, dry white wines: 50°F–55°F (10°C–13°C)
Light-bodied red wines: 50°F–55°F (10°C–13°C)
Tawny Port and sweet Sherry: 54°F–61°F (12°C–16°C)
Medium-bodied red wines: 55°F (13°C)
Full-bodied and aged red wines: 59°F–64°F (15°C–18°C)
Vintage Port: 64°F–68°F (18°C–20°C)

Avoid prolonged cold box storage of the white wines by ensuring that stock is rotated. Also, do not serve the white wines too cold. A wine's volatile aromas are not readily released when the temperature is too cold. A wine served too cold will display fewer aromatics and less flavor than its more temperate counterpart. In general, the higher quality, more complex, and older a white wine is, the less it should be chilled. Conversely, the higher the acidity, the cooler it should be served.

ORDER TAKING

To begin the process of wine service, the server should determine who will be responsible for ordering the wine for the table. In the context of wine service, this person is referred to as the host. If it is not immediately apparent who at the table is to assume this function, the server should politely ask. While taking the order and sampling the wine, the server should, whenever possible, stand to the right of the host.

While some guests may be very comfortable with wine and know precisely what they wish to order without the need for assistance, many will need some guidance. Accordingly, the server should be familiar with the restaurant's wine list, including details concerning each wine on the list and how those wines pair with the items on the food menu. The server should also ask the guest about which wines he or she has enjoyed in the past (and which ones he or she hasn't) to get a better understanding of what wine the patron may like. Throughout the process, the server should develop a dialogue with the guest to build trust and confidence.

Once a wine selection has been made, the server should repeat the selection back to the customer, along with the vintage, to confirm the order. It is also important to ensure that the correct information is relayed to the bartender or other on-premise colleagues who may be responsible for obtaining the specific bottle of wine.



Figure 23–1: Presenting the wine

SERVICE

Once the wine is ordered, the server should select the appropriate glasses and carry them to the table on a beverage tray. The glasses should be set to the right of the water glass, above the knife on the right side of each place setting. Presuming that the table is freestanding, the glasses should be placed on the table from the right-hand side of the customer, with the server walking around the table in a clockwise direction.

After the glasses have been set, the wine should be brought to the table. The bottle is presented to the host from the right side by holding it at an angle, label facing up, so that the selection can be confirmed. The brand name of the wine, its appellation, and the vintage should be repeated back to the guest, and the bottle should not be opened until the guest has accepted the wine.



Figure 23–2: Cutting the capsule

During the process of removing the cork, the bottle may be held in one hand or placed on a table. While service standards vary, many experts suggest placing the bottle on a table whenever possible for better leverage and to minimize shaking—which could dislodge sediment in older wines.

To begin the process, the server should use the knife of the corkscrew to cut around the capsule below the raised lip or bulge of the bottle's neck. If using a wine opener that has a foil cutter, a clean cut can be made above the raised lip.

The top of the capsule should be removed and placed in an apron or pocket (never in the ice bucket or on the table). If the foil tears while cutting it, the entire capsule should be removed. If the wine is sealed with a screw cap, the server simply unscrews the cap and places it in his or her pocket or out of sight of the guest and proceeds with service.

The label of the bottle should, whenever possible, face the guest while the wine is being opened and served. The server inserts the tip of the corkscrew's spiral into the center of the cork from a 45° angle and twists it into an upright position. While holding the bottle with

one hand, the server turns the corkscrew until the entire spiral—save for one turn—has entered the cork. The corkscrew lever is then placed on the lip of the bottle and held in place with a finger of one hand, while the other hand slowly and gently pulls the handle of the corkscrew upward in order to extract the cork. Corks should be removed from the bottle as quietly as possible. A server should never allow his or her fingers to touch the mouth of the bottle.

Once removed from the bottle, the cork should be taken off the corkscrew and placed to the right of the host, without placing the bottle on the table, if it hasn't already been. In formal service, a side plate or tray is used to present the cork. This tradition dates back to the days when the winery's seal, emblazoned on the cork, was a guarantee of authenticity.

Taking a clean napkin, the server wipes the rim of the bottle and, holding the bottle approximately 2 inches (5 cm) above the glass, pours the host a sample (1 to 2 ounces [30 to 59 ml]) so he or she can evaluate and accept the beverage.



Figure 23–3: Removing the cork

If a customer is dissatisfied with the wine, the server should, without confrontation, determine the cause, such as cork taint or a sulfur-based fault. Whatever the cause, if the wine in question is indeed faulty, the guest's glass should immediately be replaced with a new one, and a fresh bottle of the same wine should be presented, with service beginning again. Restaurants and retailers are often able to obtain a credit from their distributor when returning faulty bottles.

However, if the guest simply doesn't like the wine, the server should follow the restaurant's policies and possibly suggest that the customer try a different wine. If possible, the server should find out what the guest doesn't like about the wine so that an appropriate substitute can be recommended. A hostile attitude should never be taken. Bottles that have been returned and are in good condition may be used in by-the-glass programs.

Presuming that the wine is sound and has been accepted by the guest, the server should then fill the glasses, moving clockwise around the table (when possible) and finishing with the host. If a guest of honor is present, this person may be served first regardless of seat position.

Wine is poured from the customer's right unless at a booth or otherwise unreachable. The glasses should not be lifted from the table, and they should be filled only one-third to one-half full, depending on the size of the wine glass. As there are five 5-ounce (148-ml) glasses of wine in a wine bottle, a table of up to five people will be adequately served in this fashion. With large tables of six or more, the pour should be adjusted appropriately to ensure that all guests get an equal amount of wine.

In order to avoid dripping wine at the completion of each pour, the bottle is given a slight twist when lifting it from the glass and the rim of the bottle is wiped with a serviette to catch any drips. If there is wine left in the bottle when the server is finished pouring, he or she should place the wine bottle on the table to the right of the host or, in the case of white wines, in an ice bucket to the right of the host.

In formal service, the wine may be placed on a coaster instead of directly on the table, or at a side table or station.



Figure 23–4: Pouring the wine

If a second bottle of the same wine is ordered, the host should be brought a fresh glass for tasting the new bottle. Upon approval, the table is served. If the second bottle of wine ordered is different from the first, fresh glasses are needed for everyone. If a second set of glasses is required, the second glass is placed directly behind the first. Any dirty glasses remaining on the table should be removed.

Serving older red wines requires careful handling, as these wines can have quite a bit of sediment in the bottle. The usual practice is to stand these wines upright for a while, and then remove the cork and decant the wine off the sediment.

If the cork breaks off in the neck of the bottle, the corkscrew should be gently reinserted to try to salvage the remaining section. If it can be extracted cleanly from the bottle, the wine continues to be served as described above. If it is unsalvageable, the server should ask the guest if it is acceptable to decant through a cheesecloth or a specifically designed decorative wine funnel that has a filtering screen to catch any bits of cork that have fallen into the wine.

Service of Sparkling Wine

Bottles of sparkling wine take a little extra care when opening, and proper service has as much to do with safety as ceremony. First, it is important to be sure that the bottle has not been shaken or roughly handled en route to the table. Next, the server should make sure that it is properly chilled, as cold reduces the pressure inside the bottle and allows for more control of the cork. Finally, the server should ensure that the bottle and his or her hands are dry; wet bottles are slippery and difficult to control.

Care must be taken when opening such bottles, as a Champagne cork is capable of flying across a room at 65 mph. Many injuries have resulted from lack of attention when opening a bottle of sparkling wine. In addition, the bottle can slip from one's hands if it isn't held tightly. During the process of opening a sparkling wine, the bottle may be held in one hand or may be placed in the ice bucket.

To begin the process of opening a bottle of sparkling wine, the small tab is pulled to allow a clean tear along the perforation of the capsule. Alternatively, a cut may be made by cutting the foil beneath the wire cage. The foil is removed from the top of the cork and placed in the server's pocket. A cloth napkin is placed over the bottle, and, with one hand, the server grips the neck of the bottle and places a thumb on top of the cork. With the other hand, the wire cage is unfastened by untwisting it in a counterclockwise fashion, usually for six twists. Removing the cage can allow the cork to be suddenly expelled, so it is best not to remove the cage—or one's thumb—from the cork.



Figure 23–5: Sparkling wine—unfastening the wire cage

Holding the bottle at a 45° angle, the server rotates the bottle while tightly holding onto the cork. The cork is not twisted or turned, as the top section of the cork may break off. It is important to ensure that the cork is not pointing at anyone or at anything breakable. After a few turns of the bottle, the cork should slide gently into the napkin with a soft hiss. If the wine is not quite as cold as it should be, the server should try to hold in the cork so that the escaping CO₂ can be released from the side of the cork as it is being expelled. A loud pop, although festive, allows too much carbon dioxide to escape and deflates the bead.

If the sparkling wine begins to foam out of the bottle after the cork is popped, it is possible that it was not properly chilled. To prevent the loss of good wine, the bottle should be returned to a 45° angle for a few seconds. It should stop foaming immediately. The entire cork, including the cage, is presented to the guest, and the server proceeds with service.



Figure 23–6: Serving sparkling wine

SERVICE TIPS

TEMPERATURE

Most sparkling and white wines are served far too cold. “Chilled” and “ice-cold” are not the same. As there are five glasses of wine in a wine bottle, a four-top will usually finish the first bottle of wine long before it warms enough to require the use of an ice bucket. Accordingly, an ice bucket should not automatically be brought to the table for still white wine. The server should ask first.

As a demonstration, purposely overchill a bottle of high-quality white wine. Sniff and sip it immediately, and then continue to do this every few minutes thereafter. Notice that as the wine slowly warms up, more and more volatile aromas and flavors are released.

Many red wines served at room temperature in this day and age are served too warm, and the taste of alcohol becomes predominant, resulting in the perception of a dull and hot wine. The room-temperature rule for red wines was written in the days before central heating.



Figure 23–7: Decanting wine

BREATHING AND DECANTING

Most fine red wines improve if allowed to breathe for a while, although just how long the process should be allowed to last is a hotly debated issue. The preferred method to allow a wine to breathe is to aerate the wine by carefully pouring it into a decanter or carafe.

The purpose of decanting is to allow the wine's aromas and flavors to develop by exposing the wine to oxygen. For those wines that are not overly delicate, vigorously splashing the wine as it is poured into the decanter further aerates the wine. The few moments it takes to decant a wine is roughly equivalent to hours of time spent simply letting the wine stand opened.

Decanting may be appropriate in the following cases:

- *Young, robust red wines:* Many wines are released into the market so quickly after bottling that they are still heavily tannic. This can mask the fruit and coat the mouth with astringency.

Decanting softens and mellows these tannins through exposure to air; this same exposure allows the fruit flavors to emerge more fully.

- *Complex wines with moderate aging:* Some wines, such as Nebbiolo-based reds and various Cabernet Sauvignons, are dense, compact, and complex, able to age for decades. Wines of this type with limited age may be improved by being decanted for an hour or so, which allows the aromas to open and expand.
- *Fully aged and mature wines:* These older wines may be fragile, and too much splashing may dry out the fruit and tannins. It might be helpful to use a stoppered decanter and consume the wine immediately after decanting, before the delicate aromas dissipate.
- *Wines with sediment:* Certain wines may have sediment in the bottle. Ideally, these wines should be stored in a decanting cradle or placed upright for an hour or so to allow the sediment to sink to the bottom of the bottle before service. The wine can then be carefully decanted over a lit candle to allow the server to see when sediment reaches the shoulders of the bottle. If this is not an option, the wine may be decanted through a wine funnel with a filter screen. The wine should be poured slowly so the sediment is caught in the filter, leaving the last ounce or so of sediment-concentrated wine in the bottle.
- *Biodynamic white wines:* Many producers of white wines such as Domaine Zind-Humbrecht and Pascal Jolivet insist their younger-vintage white wines improve with aeration. This is to remedy any potential reductive nature in the wine that may be due to the minimal exposure to oxygen the wines receive during production and storage.

STORAGE

Proper wine storage can be either very expensive (wine cellars or wine cabinets) or inexpensive (closets and basements). Regardless of which option is chosen, there are a few basic guidelines that

should be followed.

A wine cellar should provide the following:

- Cool temperatures (50°F–60°F/10°C–15°C)
- A moderately humid environment (65%–75%)
- Constant temperature or minimal temperature fluctuations
- An environment with no vibrations
- No light, especially sunlight
- Storage for wine bottles on their sides or at an angle, so that the cork remains moist and does not dry out. Wine may be stored with the labels face-up to prevent scuffing or staining, although some people recommend storing the labels face-down to prevent them from getting dusty.

The vast majority of wines are meant to be consumed in their youth. The fresh acidity and fruit character of these wines will be enjoyed best during the first few years after their release. With time, wines lose some of these favorable attributes as chemical and phenolic reactions occur within the bottle. Thus, only a small percentage of wines should be laid down to age for any considerable period of time.



Figure 23–8: Well-equipped wine cellar

FOOD AND WINE

Wine is most often enjoyed with food, and such pairings are often a topic of much discussion and difference of opinion. There have been many approaches to food and wine pairing, from the classically elaborate French systems of the nineteenth century, where each specific variation of a dish needed to be paired with a specific wine, to the more modern proposition that any wine can be paired with any food based on the customer's preference. In between those two extremes are several approaches that provide some general guidelines as to what elements will enhance the pairing of food and wine.

In general, a good food and wine pairing has been achieved when both the food and the wine remain unchanged or seem more enjoyable when consumed together. However, in some cases, the food or the wine (or occasionally both) are enhanced and transformed—creating a wonderful symbiotic relationship. Some classic examples include Sauternes with foie gras, ruby Port with Stilton cheese, rack of lamb with St.-Émilion, and fresh oysters with Chablis. While these pairings are matters of personal taste, there are also reasons why they do work well for most diners.

In most cases, the key to a successful pairing of wine and food is an understanding of how the different components of one affect the other. As has been discussed previously, a given wine will contain varying levels of several possible taste components—to include sweetness, acidity, bitterness, tannin, umami and (in rare cases) saltiness. Food can also be described in these terms, and may contain fat and aspects of chemesthesis (such as perceived “heat” from chili peppers) as well. When choosing wine to accompany a specific dish, it helps to consider the components of both the food and the wine, and to understand how these components—as well as other factors such as flavor intensity—are likely to interplay.

One caveat: as in all things related to food and wine, people will vary in their abilities to notice, recognize, and enjoy certain aspects

of any given wine-and-food pairing. As such, it is always recommended to keep individual preferences—the *delight of the diner*—in mind.



Figure 23–9: Classic pairing—Cabernet Sauvignon and filet mignon

INTENSITY

In many successful wine and food pairings, neither one overpowers the other in intensity. Many refer to this as matching the intensity of the wine to the food. Along these lines, a light fish, such as trout or perch, would probably pair well with Muscadet (a light-bodied white wine), but it would most likely be overwhelmed by Barolo (a full-bodied red wine). Conversely, the medium weight of a salmon preparation is a perfect foil for a medium-bodied Pinot Noir.

In the case of very rich food, such as blue cheese, roasted meats, or rich desserts, it may also work to contrast the heaviness of the food with a lighter wine. In this case, the wine serves as a refreshing break from the heaviness of the food and acts as a palate cleanser. For instance, a rich dessert, such as apricot cheesecake, can pair delightfully with a similarly rich and heavy dessert wine such as

Sauternes. However, it could also make a successful pairing, albeit in a different way, with a lighter dessert wine such as Moscato d'Asti.

ACIDITY

The acidity in wine is one of the key elements that makes wine an outstanding partner for food. This acidity increases salivation, which can actually cause a lifting effect that enhances the flavors of food. While it may seem counterintuitive, acidity in food will actually decrease the perception of acidity in wine. Therefore, foods high in acid will not pair well with anything but correspondingly high-acid wines; otherwise, the wine will seem flat. For this reason, many of the most food-loving wines in the world are high in acid. Pairings that take excellent advantage of this interaction include goat cheese with Sauvignon Blanc, in which the wine becomes softer and the fruit flavors more detectable, and a tomato-based sauce served with a high-acid red wine such as Barbera. In the case of very acidic foods such as ceviche (fish or shellfish marinated in lime juice or other high-acid liquid) and salads dressed with vinaigrette, it is best to choose a high-acid wine such as Riesling, Prosecco, or cool-climate Sauvignon Blanc.

In addition to reducing the perception of acidity in a wine, moderate-to-high acid foods can *increase* the perception of sweetness and fruitiness in a wine, and may cause the wine to seem richer or fuller in body.

SWEETNESS

Sweetness in food can diminish the perception of sweetness, body, and fruitiness in a wine. This can be an advantage when serving ultra-sweet wines, such as certain ice wines or late-harvest wines that may seem overly sweet when tasted on their own. Served with sweet foods, such wines are often perceived as less sweet, less rich, and—to some people—more balanced. However, this same effect can have a negative impact on the flavors of a dry wine, making it seem overly thin and unpleasantly acidic to some diners.

Wines with a slight sweetness, such as an off-dry Riesling, can balance spicy flavors in food. At a certain point, spicy “heat” will not only make it impossible to detect the flavors in wine but may also increase the perception of any bitterness or tannin. The one taste that will diminish the perception of spicy “heat” on the palate is sweetness. A dish with a moderate amount of spiciness is best paired with an acidic but slightly sweet wine, such as an off-dry version of Riesling or Chenin Blanc.

BITTERNESS

In contrast to the taste dynamics of sweetness and acidity, where the components tend to cancel each other out, bitterness in food enhances the bitter tastes in wine. Unless this is desirable, one should try to pair bitter tastes in food with wines that are low in bitterness. Wines that are medium-to-high in acidity and those with some residual sugar typically pair well with bitter tastes in food. Keep in mind that oak-aged wines have a bitter component to them. Overly bitter foods are not necessarily appreciated by the American palate, but foods such as spinach, broccoli, asparagus, and eggplant have an element of bitterness to them. The bitterness in chocolate is the main reason why this delightful food is so difficult to pair with wine, but it does tend to work well with sweet, intensely flavored wines such as ruby Port or late-harvest Zinfandel.

FATS

A bit (or a lot) of fat can give a dish amplitude and richness, provide satiety, and even cause the release of endorphins. Fats also have the ability to coat the tongue, sometimes to the point where it is difficult for the diner to discern flavors. This fact is the basis for the often-successful pairing of acidic wines—especially white wines such as Albariño or Sauvignon Blanc and/or sparkling wines—with fatty or oily foods. In such a pairing, the acidic wine can have the effect of “cutting through the richness” and cleansing the palate after a bite of rich foods (such as those in cream or butter sauces) or fatty foods—be it a juicy burger or fried potatoes.

SALT

Moderately salty foods made with a good-quality salt product can pair well with a wide range of wines. In general, salt in food can make a wine seem richer in body and fruitiness, while toning down any bitterness or astringency. In particular, the cooling, refreshing acidity of wines such as Sauvignon Blanc or Champagne can pair well with moderately salty foods—the combination of salt and acidity can lend a pleasant accent to the flavors of both the wine and the food. Salt-and-sweet is another classic culinary combination, and salty foods tend to pair well with sweet wines—as seen in the pairing of sweet wines with salty blue cheese.

Salt is one component of food that is not typically found in wine and therefore generally presents a contrast. Salt in food can be tough on wine if taken to extremes, so overly salty foods should be avoided with fine wines. Many people believe that wines with alcohol levels in the 14%-16% abv range or those with overtly oaky flavors should be used with caution in combination with salty foods, as these pairings create a bitter sensation on the palate for some people. It is also best to avoid iodized salt when preparing food to be paired with wine, as many people perceive such products to be bitter—which can be problematic when combined with any bitter tastes in the wine.



Figure 23–10: Classic pairing: Riesling and sushi

UMAMI

The pairing of umami-rich foods and wine can be difficult to comprehend, in part because the taste component of umami can be tricky to isolate, recognize, and even understand. However, it is an important concept to grasp, as many food that are considered to be difficult to pair with wine—such as asparagus and eggs—may have earned the reputation based on their level of umami. In simple terms, umami-rich foods may increase the perception of bitterness and astringency in wine, while at the same time diminishing the perception of the wine’s sweetness, fruitiness, and richness (from viscosity or body). Some of these interactions can be assuaged by the use of salt, as discussed above.

FLAVORS

Much attention has been paid to matching and contrasting flavors in wine and food. For example, it can be argued that smoked foods do well with the floral flavors of Riesling (based on a flavor contrast), or that the use of herbs enhances the varietal character of an

herbaceous Sauvignon Blanc (based on a flavor match). Many aficionados take it a step further and consider *flavor synergy*—the sometimes surprising combining of flavors that creates a pleasant, new flavor not experienced in the wine or the food alone—to be one of the ultimate goals of food and wine pairing. Yet this is an area where it becomes even more difficult to draw universal conclusions, as the effect of a certain flavor combination is very difficult to predict. Thankfully, most flavor interactions are pleasant, and as long as a wine pairing is predicted to be successful based on taste components, the flavors will most likely be harmonious as well.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION

When it comes to the successful pairing of food and wine, many people tend to concentrate on the main ingredient, such as chicken, beef, or fish. However, the basic building blocks of a meal typically provide very little by way of tastes (particularly sweetness, saltiness, and acidity) or flavors before they are prepared. In this sense, the preparation matters just as much as the ingredient. If chicken is the main dish of a meal, we have a clue as to what the meal may entail, but we really need to know the specifics: is it smoked chicken served with spicy apricot chutney, poached chicken with lemon-herb vinaigrette, or sautéed chicken with crispy onions and shallot cream sauce? All of these dishes bring a unique combination of taste and flavor components—to potentially include elements of sweetness, saltiness, bitterness, acidity, umami, chemesthesis, fat, and intensity—to the table, and each has its own set of ideal wine pairings that would bring out the best in the dish and the meal.

RESPONSIBLE BEVERAGE ALCOHOL SERVICE

In the United States, third-party liability and negligence laws affect anyone who serves beverage alcohol, whether in a food and beverage establishment, at a wine tasting event, or in one's own home. There are a number of states that now require all servers of beverage alcohol to show proof of having successfully completed an

acceptable responsible service training program. While some states require any public server of alcohol to have completed their own programs, most states recognize the validity of two programs that are offered throughout the United States and internationally: the National Restaurant Association's ServSafe Alcohol® and TIPS® (Training for Intervention ProcedureS).

Regardless of state requirements, having such certification can reduce liability insurance premiums for any server or employer. In EU countries, laws tend to be even more stringent than the laws in the United States, and there is a concerted effort to counter alcohol abuse. The Society of Wine Educators regards this to be a significant issue and encourages all who take the Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) Exam to be properly trained and certified. It also requires all Certified Wine Educators (CWEs) to be certified in responsible beverage alcohol service at the time they earn the CWE certification.

Although the food and beverage industry cannot be responsible for all of the problems associated with excess alcohol consumption, servers of beverage alcohol, including members of the wine trade and educators who conduct wine tastings, can ensure that their behavior promotes responsible consumption of alcoholic beverages by doing the following things:

- Checking identification as a matter of routine in every case in which there is doubt about a taster's age.
- Recognizing the signs of intoxication and refraining from serving anyone who has consumed too much alcohol or exhibits signs of intoxication.
- Declining to serve any customer who appears to have consumed excess alcohol elsewhere.
- Encouraging impaired customers to call for a cab or contact a friend to get a ride home, or offering to make the call oneself.
- Persuading the customer to surrender the car keys when warranted.
- Observing responsible standards in serving and consuming

alcohol so as to set a good example for colleagues, students, and friends.