

The key to increasing wine sales is to sell more wine by the glass. Most small to medium-sized restaurants have inadequate knowledge of wine. Your wine buying habits tend to gravitate towards price when you make the mistake of assuming your customers don't know anything about wine. Many restaurants make the mistake of offering only a house wine by the glass. This house wine tends to be the cheapest wine obtainable.

You do not need to have the knowledge of a Sommelier to improve the level of your wine service while keeping the prices and profit margins in the same general area. The first thing you need to do is a little research. Do not rely solely on the wine distributor's sales person; this is only effective up to a point. You have to keep in mind his or her interest is having you serve the wines they sell. It is important for you to know the best wines that will work in your establishment and serve these wines. This may mean dealing with more than one distributor.

I am located in Pennsylvania. We have the most complicated liquor system in the country. Buying good wine becomes difficult. However, the state store system has improved over the years and they have made a concerted effort to increase the availability of wines from all over. In other states you just buy directly from the distributors list and you will need to pick and choose in order to achieve your objective.

Most of the clientele of small to medium size restaurants serving a reasonable fare have many customers who ask for wines by the grape variety; Merlot, Chardonnay, etc. These customers tend not to be interested in the fact that there are many wines in the world having the same grape variety. Improving your wine selections will probably not have an impact on this type of patron.

Small restaurants and Pub type restaurants can benefit from the knowledge of how to improve their wine sales as well. Restaurants with a bar who do a cocktail hour all other establishments that sell wine in any manner can improve their sales.

The first step in improving your wine sales is to make the majority of your wines available by the glass. Most customers will not buy bottles. Half bottles are not readily available in the US as they are in Europe and other parts of the world, we do not seem to have that type of wine culture. Especially in Pennsylvania the system makes it difficult or impossible to obtain half bottles or individual serving bottles, as you would get on a plane.

Offering a variety of wines by the glass, putting a wine list on each table, and training your servers to enable them to speak intelligently about the wines will contribute to improving your wine sales. Do not maintain the misconception that you should only sell

domestic wines. There are many wines from other countries that are better and more consistent yet in the same price range as our domestic wines. My experience dictates that the California wines we find in the liquor stores in Pennsylvania are from the large commercial wineries. These wineries do not ship their best wines east. Coppola and the Clois du Bois are two California wineries with better than average wines. They might be a little more expensive than the wines you are used to selling, but are worth it. Increased volume will make up for a smaller margin.

The States of Oregon and Washington produce nice Pinot Noir wines. In the whites they do a Pinot Gris. This is the German version of the Italian Pinot Grigio. The Gris version is dry and crisp, similar to a Sauvignon Blanc. The Sauvignon Blanc wines being imported from New Zealand and Argentina, in my opinion are a better wine and a better buy for the quality than the California versions we can find in our liquor stores or wine distributors.

I favor the French wines from the Beaujolais area of France that we see here. These wines are still the best wines for the money. The wines from Louis Jadot, George DeBeufe and the B & G Distributor are in the same price range as the domestic brands. They are also sold in both 7.5 and 1.5 liter sizes. These wines are more consistent and will hold up better in the small restaurant settings serving red wines.

Serving wine should be done with care. Wine is a living organism and should be treated as such. It reacts to the environment. Red wine needs to breathe. The definition of the phrase "room temperature" is not intended to indicate the temperature of the room you are in. The temperature of your establishment can average around 75 degrees. This is not a good environment for red wine consumption. Leaving the bottles of red wines on the counter is not a good way to store your red wine between servings. Investing in a small wine cooler that keeps your red wines at 65 degrees would be a good investment. These coolers are relatively inexpensive. If you are serious about increasing your wine sales and improving your wine service, an investment in one of these coolers will pay for itself by increasing wine sales in a short time. Customers that are accustomed to drinking their red wines warm can leave the wine sit for five minutes and it will warm up to the temperature of the room.

Most white wines are best enjoyed cold. Keeping them in your normal refrigeration system will be adequate. Your white wine selections should include one or two Chardonnays if your customers request this wine. Do not over load your wine list with too much of the same grape variety of wine. A good tip is to have more Cabernet Sauvignons than Merlot.

There are so many grape varieties in the world that it is best to limit the quantity of each variety. Of course, always pay attention to your customer's requests. But try to have them sample new wines that you are serving. Have occasional wine tasting parties. Offer servings of 2 or 3 ounces per wine of three different wines. Offer them in a group to encourage experimentation.

This article has given you a number of good suggestions. Now it is up to you to implement them as they fit in your establishment. Do not be afraid to experiment and encourage your wine drinking customers to experiment. Encourage your other customers who do not normally drink wine to try some of your new wines. This will increase your wine customer base. Most of all remember to observe your customers habits, train your staff and put a wine list by the glass on each table.