

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of two wine glasses filled with red wine. The lighting is warm and dramatic, with a strong orange and red glow that creates a sense of depth and texture. The wine in the glasses is dark and rich, and the light reflects off the rim of the glasses and the surface of the liquid. The overall mood is sophisticated and elegant.

# Liquid profits

By Justin Koury

Before reading this article, ask yourself these three questions. After you have read it and you encounter the next client, ask yourself the same three questions...

- How do I incorporate wine into the overall design?
- Why is beverage such an important part of the food service industry?
- Is the client/end-user getting the absolutely best advice when it comes to beverage choices, education and marketing?

Over this two part series, the positives and negatives of the wine list will be discussed:

- How to incorporate wine décor into the design
- How to increase menu profitability using wine
- How to effectively train all staff on wine
- Training wine staff
- Décor to match

I can tell you from first hand experience that there is nothing worse than walking into an establishment with an expectation of a positive experience and having that expectation shattered. Several months ago, a friend and I went to a local hotel for dinner, expecting a fine steak-house experience. To be fair, the wine list is the least concern for most, but it was mine. Paying \$45 for a steak and having just 10 wine choices was surprising and very unsettling. Why do restaurants, hotels and other dining establishments seem to put everything – including the kitchen sink – ahead of wine in the priorities list?

This could be a fatal mistake. As consultants it is our job to equip those we serve with everything they need to serve their customers. To me, the end-user is not the client but those whom he/she serves. Here are some key points to help clients avoid these errors.

### Designing the perfect setting for wine

- When you sit down to hammer out the design keep wine in mind along with your menu and demographic. As a designer you have the ability to introduce wine décor as a part of the overall establishment
- The wine list is the best way to increase check totals and increase profitability.
- The only thing worse than a design or décor that doesn't match the menu is an ineffective or even absent wine list.
- Stick to wines that match the menu and the overall design.
- Accent the walls with wine/ beverage-related art
- Instead of having all of the wine stored in the back, use the storage as part of the décor (i.e. wine racks, cooling units, even wine cellars). Accent the walls with bottle racks or a cellar

It's understood that, when designing a bar, you showcase the choices available, especially the top brands. This equals more sales. The old notion of out of sight out of mind, does indeed apply in this case. When people see the bar, they tend to want drinks.

Other than the wine list what do those who want wine see? A confusing wine list, many of which are longer than some novels, with unhelpful descriptions, and the same format over and over again – wines by country; wines by price; wines by taste: sweet, dry, blends, and so on.



Why not try something new. Instead of writing a wine list as a part of the menu, to make a statement with the lists, why not try some of the following:

1. Use a smooth, easy to read font, not cursive and small
2. Get creative. It's okay to use pictures and graphics; it makes for a more interesting read
3. Write better, more in-depth descriptions, not just "this wine is great with steak." Talk about what makes it great with steak, what flavors will each wine bring out in each dish
4. Have a list of house specialties or drinks that fit your type of establishment
5. Introduce a wine selection along with the specials. Never have a nightly or weekly special without suggesting a wine or possibly a house drink (perhaps a scotch or bourbon) to accompany it
6. Recommend wine or alcohol with every type of meal just because a guest orders chicken tenders doesn't mean they can't have a drink; they might like a beer
7. For those who may not like wine, offer recommendations of beer or spirits on the menu
8. Lose the white zinfandel; there are plenty of other selections such as rosé and Riesling that are much better
9. Train your staff often and train them well. The better trained and more knowledgeable the staff is, the easier it will be to sell beverages

Remember that most of the time people go into an establishment with an expectation. When you meet that expectation, they might come back. When you exceed it, you create a consumer who knows they can count on the service you provide. They WILL come back.

Wine and sprits are great ways to boost the check average, and create an atmosphere of enjoyment and fun. There are

some consumers who will spend \$2,000 on a bottle of Ch. Mouton-Rothschild 1982, while across the room there's another who won't pay \$5 for Sutter Home White Zinfandel. Consumers are always expanding their knowledge and broadening their horizons. It's important not to make assumption based on your perception of the income in your area. Just because your area isn't a rich one, it doesn't mean that your customers won't want to spend money on a decent bottle of wine.

Some owners don't want to spend the money on a wine list or cellar. An alternative is a BYOB service with a small corking fee – that's the cost of having your server pop a bottle and serve it to them and a great way to enhance the experience.

### Here are some suggestions:

- Offer types of wine that people in the local demographic will be likely to buy; provide a range of selections
- Train the staff; bartenders, servers and even the back-of-house staff would benefit from having this knowledge
- Work with local vendors and distributors when designing a wine list or even a bar. Most companies are happy to offer promotions, discounts and even training if it means product gets sold
- Designers should incorporate wine, spirits, and beverage service into the overall plan. Leaving this out can be a mistake
- Once the type of décor, the menu, layout, and uniforms have all been decided, you will have to stop and look at the beverage service
- Bourbon, scotch, gin, vodka, tequila, whiskey, cognac, beer and rum all have multiple levels from cheap well varieties to top-of-the-shelf, triple-distilled, aged 21 years, and so on
- Make sure the bar is well stocked and adequately represents what the public will drink. For example, don't fill a neighborhood pub with first growth Bordeaux

# Power Soak

## 1/2 pg V

## 4.875x7.625"

Ladies and Gentlemen, take my advice: pour 'em a drink and leave out the ice. 🍷

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