

The management of wine

Even the most superb wine, if managed improperly, can leave a foul taste in your customers' mouths. **Neil Fortes** explains



Neil Fortes is an industrial psychologist and certified mediator by profession, but a wine guru at heart. He has a 25-year history in the wine business, consulting for many wine companies and marketing wines across Canada and the U.S. His company, Wine Guru, offers restaurant and hospitality training courses.

For more information, please visit www.wineguru.ca or contact Neil directly by e-mail at neil.fortes@wineguru.ca

I saw a very interesting slogan on a poster recently which piqued my interest.

“Customer service is not a department but an attitude.”

I found myself thinking and applying this to wine. Some believe that once wines are purchased for your wine list, that's it. End of story.

But in fact, it's just the beginning.

Operators should be mindful of how wines are both stored and presented to the customer.

Wines are a living commodity and are like people, requiring management, safekeeping and appreciation.

STORAGE

Wines need to be stored in a cool place in order to preserve the essence of the liquid in the bottle.

Many a wine has deteriorated due to storage in a temperature which was too warm for the well-being of the wine. This may cause the wine to age quicker than expected. A reasonable storage temperature is between 11 and 13 degrees centigrade.

In days gone by, wine bottles were corked and as such it was important to store wine either on its side or upside down in order to keep the cork moist. If the cork dries out, the wine in the bottle will deteriorate and eventually become undrinkable and sour.

It surprises me that suppliers, knowing this fact, will deliver wines packed in cartons in an upright position.

Wines can sometimes remain in a carton for months or years, especially in the case of international shipping, which may lead to quality issues.

Because of this, many top-end wines are packed flat. It's a more labour-intensive and, therefore, costly process. These cases are always six-bottle cases.

Some restaurateurs might display current wines upright under fluorescent lights, for customers to see. But these bottles will likely spoil.

With the popularity of screw-cap closures in Canada, the practice of storing wines upside down

or on their side is unimportant, which is a huge management and display advantage.

INTERMEDIARY STORAGE

White wines can be cooled or chilled depending on personal preference, but seven degrees will chill a wine nicely for the table. They should not be served over-chilled because if a wine is served too cold, the nose of the wine will be diminished and in some cases the taste will be minimized.

Of course, there are many levels of quality of wines and depending on the characteristics of the wine, white wines can be optimally chilled to suit your food and your clients' palate.

Red wines can be served at room temperature so you really need an intermediary area so that the bottle can acquire room temperature which can take up to three hours.

Sometimes room temperatures are too high and a red wine loses some of its interest and may become flabby to the taste, and it may be advantageous to chill the wine slightly for a 20-minute period

SERVING AND ETIQUETTE

Wine by the glass is brought to the table and it is expected that there is little etiquette when serving the glass of wine chosen. Wine by the bottle has a different status and it is expected that when wine is ordered, the bottle should be brought to the table in an unopened form. The label should be shown to the client by the server on a 'report back' basis whereby the name of the wine chosen is confirmed.

If there might perhaps be a vintage change on offer, I am personally a great believer in the decanting of a wine. It allows even the most basic wine to come alive.

The introduction of oxygen by simple aeration by pouring the wine in a decanter will 'smooth the wine out' to the palate and add nuances of smell which may be attractive.



Of course, this approach to serving will depend on the type and condition of that particular wine.

In addition, the wine is presented in a caring way, and shows interest on the part of the restaurant and the server, to allow the client to experience the best possible circumstances to enjoy the wine.

Decanters need not be elaborate. A simple carafe or jug may be ample and easy to manage, or if you prefer, ornate and involved. Riedel has a great range of decanters for this purpose.

WINES BY THE GLASS

Wines by the glass continue to be key to have a profitable wine program, and wine management for this program is indeed the most crucial.

A bottle left open for longer than a night will become oxidized. It will taste bitter and lose its fruity notes.

Many restaurants are not aware of this and sometimes serve wine from bottles that have been open for two to three days.

However, there are inexpensive methods for keeping wines fresh.

Some restaurants use a pump system which is supposed to extract the air from the bottle but it is my experience that these pumps do not work effectively.

The most effective method is a gas spray containing argon. Products such as Private Preserve and WineLife are quite effective and will keep a wine fresh for at least two to three days.

I have also sampled a product called ReServe which uses 100 per cent argon gas, which is inert and completely environmentally safe. Argon is actually one of the gases present in our atmosphere and dissipates into the air without odour. This new product on the market has a dispensing valve attached to the canister which will measure the exact dose you need to spray into the neck of the opened bottle. This device is consumer-friendly and inexpensive to use.

Customers may order wine by the glass in half

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF CARAFES AVAILABLE

Product	Description	Price Case*	Other Information
Ypsilon mini	Available w: 5 OZ or 6 OZ Pour line Non lead	\$97.00	Essential for any wine by the glass service (case=12 units)
Ypsilon 1 litre	Durable multi-purpose functionality Non lead 37 OZ	\$84.00	Great for wine, juice, water (case=6 units)
RIEDEL Merlot	Ideal for tables for 2, 34 OZ Non lead	\$89.28	Presents wine beautifully (case=6 units)
RIEDEL Syrah	Ideal for tables for 2, 36 ¾ OZ Non lead	\$93.00	Presents wine beautifully (case=6 units) Has a pouring spout, easy for staff
INDIVIDUAL DECANTERS Min 1 Unit			
WMF Easy Pour	Classic Ship style easy pour design Non lead, considered very durable	\$60.00 /unit	Perhaps the most functional Decanter within the line up.
RIEDEL O Magnum	24 per cent lead, machine made 81 1/8 OZ H: 15 1/8 Inches	\$270/unit	For world-class establishments
RIEDEL SWAN	24 per cent lead, Mouth Blown, Spectacular, For upscale dining H: 23 5/8 inches	\$403.00 /unit	For world-class establishments

**Prices are approximate and may vary from distributor to distributor.*

bottle or litre formats and a carafe is usually used for this purpose.

The management of wine is an attitude and a commitment to serving the best wine possible in the most effective and pleasurable way.

There are many nuances to this concept and the methods mentioned require management rules and training.

It is all part of the love of wine which can be shown in an efficient and economical way, making the sale of wines very profitable for your establishment. 🍷