

6

Beverage provision

Aim

To outline the key considerations for beverage provision within food service operations.

Objectives

This chapter is intended to support you in:

- Promoting safe, sensible drinking
- Identifying types of wine and drinks lists
- Developing and costing wine, drink and other beverage lists
- Developing skills in operating and managing the purchasing, storage and control of beverage stocks.

6.1 Safe, sensible drinking

There is increasing concern about higher levels of alcohol consumption and the health risks associated with it. Various initiatives are being tried such as improving information on labels, alcohol exclusion areas at certain times, restrictions on price promotions and also on licensing. Those who sell and serve alcoholic beverages, as well as being the subject of various licensing arrangements (see Chapter 1, page 28) are also being given far greater encouragement to become more responsible.

The majority of the population drink alcohol for many reasons: to quench a thirst, as a relaxant or simply because it is enjoyable. A small amount of alcohol does no harm and can even be beneficial. However, the more you drink and the more frequently you drink, the greater the health risks.

Alcohol depresses the brain and nerve function, affecting a person's judgement, self-control and skills. The four general stages of becoming drunk are:

Stage 1: Happy (relaxed, talkative and sociable).

Stage 2: Excited (erratic and emotional; movement and thinking affected).

Stage 3: Confused (disorientated, loud, out of control).

Stage 4: Lethargic (unable to stand, talk or walk).

It is important that members of the service staff are aware of these stages so that potential problems can be identified and handled properly before they become more serious. This can include refusing to serve more alcohol to intoxicated persons, which is either required under the law or may be undertaken as a safety precaution – such as with people on aircraft.

■ Alcoholic strength

The two main scales of measurement of alcoholic strength may be summarised as:

- OIML Scale (European): range 0% to 100% alcohol by volume (ABV).
- American Scale (USA): range 0° to 200°.

The Organisation Internationale Métrologie Légale (OIML) Scale, previously called Gay Lussac Scale, is equal to the percentage of alcohol by volume in the drink at 20°C. It is the universally accepted scale for the measurement of alcohol.

Table 6.1: Approximate alcoholic strength of drinks (OIML scale)

0%	Non-alcoholic
not more than 0.05%	Alcohol free
0.05–0.5%	De-alcoholised
0.5–1.2%	Low alcohol
1.2–5.5%	Reduced alcohol
3–6%	Beer, cider, FABs* and 'alcopops'*** with any of these being up to 10%
8–15%	Wines, usually around 10–13%
14–22%	Fortified wines (liqueur wines) such as sherry and port, aromatised wines such as vermouth, vin doux naturels (such as Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise) and Sake***
37.5–45%	Spirits, usually at 40%
17–55%	Liqueurs, very wide range

Notes

* FABs is a term used to describe flavoured alcoholic beverages, for example, Bacardi Breezer (5.4%).

** 'Alcopops' is a term used to describe manufactured flavoured drinks (generally sweet and fruity) which have had alcohol, such as gin, added to them. They are also known as alcoholic soft drinks or alcoholic lemonade. Usually 3.5 to 5% but can be up to 10%.

*** Sake is a strong (18%), slightly sweet, form of beer made from fermented rice.

The by volume measurement indicates the amount of pure alcohol in a liquid. Thus, in a liquid measured as 40% alcohol by volume, 40% of the contents will be pure alcohol. (Under the American Scale 80° (80 degrees proof) is equal to 40% ABV). The alcoholic content of drinks, by volume, is now almost always shown on the label. Table 6.1 gives the approximate alcoholic strength of a variety of drinks

■ Sensible limits

Not drinking alcohol cuts out any risk. However, medical opinion in the United Kingdom has set (in 2016) the limit at 14 units spread throughout the week for men and women (excluding pregnant women, where the advice is for no alcohol). Drinking in excess of these recommended limits is likely to be damaging to health. One unit of is equal to 10 millilitres (liquid) or 8 grams (weight) of alcohol. This is roughly equivalent to:

- Half a pint of ordinary beer or lager
- One glass of wine (125 ml)
- One glass of sherry (50 ml)
- One measure of vermouth or other apéritif (50 ml)
- One measure of spirits (25 ml).

However, it is also important to take into account:

- There are about 100 calories in a single unit of alcohol. The number of calories quickly adds up and can lead to weight gain. Replacing food with alcohol as a source of calories denies the body essential nutrients and vitamins.
- The number of units required to reach the maximum permitted levels for driving varies between individuals. Some alcohol remains in the bloodstream for up to 18 hours after consumption. This should be considered in relation to the legal limits for alcohol when driving. The legal limit in the UK is currently 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood or 35 micrograms per 100 millilitres of breath. The legal limit in Scotland is lower at 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood or 22 micrograms per 100 millilitres of breath.

■ Calculating alcohol intake

The amount of alcohol being consumed is a measure of both the strength of the alcoholic drink and the amount or volume of the drink being consumed.

To calculate the alcohol unit intake for wines:

Wine at a specific percentage of alcohol by volume multiplied by the amount in litres equals the units of alcohol per bottle. For example:

Wine at 12% alcohol by volume \times 0.75 litre bottle = 9 units per 75 cl bottle.

Therefore this 75 cl bottle of wine will give 6×125 ml individual glasses of wine and each glass will therefore contain 1.5 units of alcohol (9 units in the whole bottle divided by the 6 glasses).