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Serving Alcoholic and Non-Alcoholic Beverages

Aims and learning outcomes

This chapter introduces the reader to beverage service procedures, and provides a sound basic knowledge about alcohol and how to serve it responsibly. On completion of this chapter the learner should be able to:

- Explain and apply the service procedures for alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Determine their legal and moral responsibilities in relation alcohol service.
- Explain the recommended safe levels of consumption for alcohol.
- Know the techniques used to prevent intoxication and to identify intoxicated guests.
- Describe the potential effects of a hangover.

4.1 Beverage service procedures

Always make your customers feel welcome, greet them with a smile, even if you are busy serving a drink order to someone else (Bamunuge, Edwards & Nutley, 2010). This helps to establish a rapport between the customer and the bartender. Whenever possible customers should also be escorted to a bar table or bar counter and seated, as this not only creates a good impression, but also helps you to maximise your seating arrangements. Upon seating a customer, show them the beverages or cocktail, wine or beer lists, explain to them any specialities of the bar or of any promotions that you are currently offering.

You should also take a customer's order as soon as possible and prepare and serve beverages to your bar's agreed standard for customer satisfaction and of course cost control.

Types of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages

Alcoholic drinks can be classified into five categories and are served accordingly to your bar's agreed standard or according to the customer's specific request (e.g. coffee as espresso, or whiskey on the rocks).

- **Wine:** still, sparkling, fortified (e.g. sherry, port, madeira) or aromatized – see below for service suggestions.
- **Beer:** ales, lagers, stouts.
- **Cider and perry.**
- **Distilled spirits:** vodka, gin, rum, whiskey, brandy and others – served straight, with water, with ice, within cocktails or speciality coffees.
- **Liqueurs:** flavoured with fruit, citrus, herb, kernel, flower, cream, berry – best served either straight, or with ice, within cocktails or within speciality coffees.

Non-alcoholic drinks can be classified into four categories:

- **Hot drinks:** Tea, coffee, chocolate – see below for service suggestions.
- **Fruit juices:** freshly squeezed or prepared juices – best served mixed with sprits or consumed straight with or without ice.
- **Mineral waters:** natural mineral water – best served chilled or at room temperature with no ice; or manufactured mixers – best served mixed with spirits or straight with ice.
- **Cordials/Syrups** (sirops, squashes) – for sweetening and flavouring mixed drinks or diluted with water to make a 'soft' drink with or without ice.

Note: Please refer to the *'Drinks Companion'* created to accompany this book for a comprehensive review of these beverages.

Still wine service

Initial considerations

Wine service procedures can differ, depending on the number and variety of wines and food which bars and restaurants offer. Each location will have its own procedure for procuring the bottle that the customer has ordered, as well as the number of glasses required. The process begins when a customer orders a particular bottle of wine. Make sure you heard them correctly by repeating the selection back to them. If you don't understand which bottle they are requesting, ask them to point it out on the menu. Less formal restaurants will allow you to ask how many people at the table will be drinking the wine, so that you will know how many glasses to bring. For example: If you have a table of three and some of the people have other drinks, ask the person who ordered the wine 'will you need three glasses?' More formal restaurants will not ask the customer, and just bring a glass for each diner. They will signal you when you are pouring out the wine if they do not want any.

Note: The bottle should never be opened prior to service, nor should any labels or foils be removed.

Glasses: The wine glasses should be spotless. If they are not, clean them. Holding them top down over a steaming bowl of hot water works well. Hint: use a coffee filter to polish the glasses dry – these leave less lint than bar rags or paper towels.

Ice buckets: If the customer ordered white wine, make sure you have a wine bucket with ice in it. (Not too much as the bottle will go in the bucket, displacing the ice and ice melts – you don't want water pouring over the top of the bucket). Don't put the bottle in the bucket yet as you don't want the label to be wet.

Equipment: Bring glasses, wine knife (corkscrew), wine, and wine bucket (if needed) to the table. (Each restaurant is different. Some put the wine bucket on the table; some have clip-on or stand alone wine stands that can be placed nearby.)

Service temperatures: White wines, light and grassy (8-10°C), white wines, robust and with a strong bouquet (10-12°C), rosé wines (10-12°C), red wines, new (12-14°C), red wines, high quality old (14-17°C).

Decanting: Certain old red wines have deposits (lees) in the bottom of the bottle. Do not decant a wine without the approval of the customer. Display the wine to the customer and decant in front of them. Leave the bottle and cork at the table. The carafe should always be at the same temperature as the wine, clean and fresh. It is advisable to place a stopper in the carafe to avoid the wine being in contact with the air too long.

How to open and present a bottle of still wine

- 1 Present the wine to the host (the person who ordered the wine) with the label facing them. State the name of the wine, the grape (if applicable), the vintage (if applicable) to confirm that the wine is the one that was ordered by the host, who will then accept or decline the wine. If they decline then the correct wine should be sourced and presented immediately.
- 2 Open the bottle in front of the customer, holding the bottle by the neck in your left hand, with the label facing the customer. Carefully cut the foil below the lip of the bottle with the blade on your waiter's knife and remove the foil. Insert the corkscrew into the bottle, and carefully extract the cork. Ensure that you have your waiter's cloth draped over your forearm so as you can wipe the top of the bottle.
- 3 The cork is presented to the customer. This is for the customer to examine the cork for defaults as this is sometimes the reason for faulty wine. If it is a screw cap there is no need to present the cap.
- 4 Serving from the right, pour a little wine for the host to taste. When pouring the wine, hold the bottle behind the label and not by the base of the bottle, so that the host can read the label again.
- 5 When pouring wine, twist the bottle to ensure that no drops of wine will fall onto the table and then wipe the top of the bottle with a waiter's cloth.