



The World of Wine



Fred Tibbitts, the
Globetrotting Wine Guy

Fred Tibbitts
interviews **Dan Hoffman**, Director,
Equipment &
Beverage
Specifications,
Lodging Food &
Beverage, Marriott
International, Inc.



Dan Hoffman

Dan, you have traveled the world growing up. Tell us about your upbringing and how it contributed to your global perspective.
I am the son of a retired US Air Force colonel. While growing up, my father was stationed in Germany and Okinawa, Japan. When living overseas, my parents

exposed me and my brothers and sisters to the region's culture through travel to nearby countries, visits to markets and restaurants to experience foods and beverages, and explorations off the military base.

You also travel extensively in your position at Marriott International. How does this influence your perspective on the business, and what has it taught you?

Travel broadens the understanding of the global economy and creates opportunities to experience the unique cultures and associated products of different cities, countries, and regions. It also affords opportunities to meet people, see different business practices, and check out the competition.

Tell us about the "Gold Standard Program" and how long you have been associated with it? When did it begin, and how has it evolved? How does it work? Does it apply to all company-managed Marriotts? What about franchised Marriotts?

The Marriott Gold Standard and Renaissance Signature Collection programs are our minimum beverage standard. The programs cover beer, malternatives and ciders, wines, spirits, and nonalcoholic beverages. There is a mandated core (16 beers, 38 wines, 72 spirits) all participating hotels are required to carry and optional selections (32 beers, malternatives and ciders, 243 wines, and 134 spirits) hotels can choose to enhance revenues. We currently work with 90 beverage partners who provide resources that include

assisting hotels in locating distributors who carry their products to providing product knowledge, training, and educational resources. The Marriott program was created in 1993; the Renaissance, 1998. I have been associated with the programs since 1998. Currently, 300 hotels participate. All managed hotels are required to participate; the program is optional for our franchised hotels.

Do you place an equal emphasis on beer, wine, and spirits? Do you promote all three categories equally? If not, how?

All of these categories, including nonalcoholic beverages, are important components that receive equal emphasis.

If a supplier is interested in presenting their beer, wine, or spirits to you for consideration for the Gold Standard Program, how and when should they go about it?

Although we review our program on an annual basis, we meet with new vendors regularly to understand their product portfolio and how it might support our beverage strategy.

Do you develop regional, national, or global food and beverage programs? If so, what is your process? Is it always internal, or do you sometimes use vendor programs if you like them?

We currently feature two global food and beverage promotions on an annual basis. We develop the promotions internally but involve input from our food and beverage partners as well as our hotels.

What are the greatest lessons you have learned from working with the Gold Standard Program? Can you provide clues as to what we can expect in the future from the Gold Standard Program?

We understand that hotel guests today are not only more well-traveled than in the past but also more knowledgeable about food and beverage products and trends than many of our staff. It is, therefore, critical to develop and implement beverage training that is easily accessible on a global basis and to motivate staff to continually learn and expand their beverage knowledge. Guests seek opportunities to "trade up" and seek products with "a sense of place." Therefore, it is important to include ultra-premium and unique products in your beverage offering. The Gold Standard and Signature Collection programs will continue to focus on premium quality products that represent exemplary examples of their category.

What is the best advice for anyone wanting to know more about your beverage program, either in terms of suppliers or all other hospitality industry professionals?

We are always pleased to speak with new suppliers.

What are your favorite wines and why?

Although I enjoy tasting new and unique wines, if given the opportunity, I gravitate to well-made Pinot Noirs. 🍷

Fred Tibbitts & Associates Inc. is a leading global wine-by-the-glass consultant, working with on-premise chains around the world. Contact him at fredbev@fredtibbitts.com.

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