

For Hotel, Resort, and Casino Food & Beverage Professionals

# Hotel F&B™

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(L-R) Chef Cupertino Ortiz, the Tides Riviera Maya; Chef Warren Schwartz, Viceroy Santa Monica; President Nicholas Clayton; and Chef Pietro Rota, the Tides South Beach.

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## The World of Wine

### PRE-SELLING WINE WITH THE DINNER RESERVATION

Fred Tibbitts interviews Peter Schoch, VP, food and beverage, the West Paces Hotel Group.



Fred Tibbitts

**West Paces has seven managed properties, three Solis-branded properties, and seven Capella-branded properties in six countries: the United States, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Mexico, and Singapore. What are the factors that differentiate the beverage concepts and programs at each location?**

We're very regionalized, very personalized. That is, we are tailor-made to the market we're in. It doesn't make sense to have a great Austrian wine list when you're in Singapore, but it does make sense when you're in Austria.

In the Solis brand, the wine list will be a little bit different than the Capella brand. In Solis, we would like to go a little more mainstream. We can have a wine list that is recognizable to the majority of people.

With Capella, we anticipate the real connoisseur to come, looking for something special that they may not be able to find in some other restaurants. That's not to say we won't have some of these wines available in Solis, but it'll be on a much smaller scale.



Peter Schoch

**How important is the wine list when it comes to the cuisine you're serving in your restaurants?**

It's very important. I think a great wine list and great food go hand in hand. I don't think

you can have one or the other. They must enhance one another. We want to have excellent wine cellars, like in Velden (Austria), where our goal is to strive for three-star Michelin. We need to have a wine list that comes with it.

**What are some of the challenges you face in training your staff to be educated about wine?**

I don't see it as a challenge. The people we select have great talent. We're in a very unique position where we have a recognizable name, and a lot of people want to work with us. We give them training programs to help them get the knowledge they need to be successful.

**Are you offering wine flights to customers?**

Not really. I think what we are doing now in the fine dining restaurants gives people a unique opportunity to have a special wine, like a Chateau Margaux '82, by the glass. The way we do that is we pre-sell the wine for that evening. So, when somebody makes a reservation, we ask the customer if that is something that they're looking for. And we're only going to offer very selective one or two bottles of wine a night, so basically the wine is sold prior to the evening.

As a customer, if I have the opportunity once, then I choose to have a great wine, and I don't have to buy the whole bottle. It makes sense to me to go for that offering because, again, it gives me the opportunity to say once in my life I

had an '82 Margaux, or whatever the wine might be.

We want to make it a little bit more exclusive. And we truly want to sell the bottle of wine by the end of the night. Because, no matter how good the system is, if the wine is three or four days old, I believe you can taste the difference.

It shouldn't be something that is available every night. If it's available every night, then it isn't special anymore. So it really has to be a selected bottle for the people who want to try something very unique but don't want to buy the whole bottle.

If you have a restaurant that serves 60 covers a night, it's pretty safe to say that you sell one or two bottles a night. You don't do that every day. Thus, you may come across a very nice bottle and say, okay, that's the right bottle to do that. So it becomes a kind of interesting, an unusual thing for a customer to have.

**What can we expect beverage-wise from the West Paces Hotel Group in the next year?**

We want to continue to be regionalized and personalized. We want to target what the customers like in that particular area of the world.

**Do you have a favorite wine?**

Not really. In my job, I have the opportunity to try all the great wines. But, at the same time, you get to know so many new vineyards and people who make the wines. So I don't really have one particular kind I prefer to the other. But I enjoy trying new things and drinking traditional wines as well. 🍷

Fred Tibbitts & Associates Inc. is a leading wine-by-the-glass consultant, working with and promoting chains around the world. Contact him at [fredbev@fredtibbitts.com](mailto:fredbev@fredtibbitts.com).

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