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Refine WITH Wine

By Fred Tibbitts Jr.

Establish a Solid Wine Program and Savor the Sales. Here's How.

So, you know very little about wine, but for whatever reason, you're ready to experiment. No problem. Here's how to go from wine novice to wine aficionado and reap the rewards of having a solid wine component in your nightclub, bar or other entertainment venue.

There is every good reason to jump in. Wine sales are rising along with spirits revenues on premise. Patrons are more curious about and open to fine wine experiences than ever before.

And even if your spirits sales are phenomenal, why not build a parallel wine program in order to savor even greater success than before. Why not, indeed?

What Do I Like?

To start with, ask yourself some basic questions about wine. "What do I like that I've tried?" Your answer could be White Zinfandel. You might just answer, "Rose D'Anjou." Either way, you like real sweet juice. But hey, that's quite

all right; the definition of a good bottle of wine is "one that YOU like," not one that THEY like.

Now comes the best part. The next step is to start down your own private wine path of exploration. The only way to get from here to there is by testing your palate, as in trial and error. What you discover may surprise you. The most important part of this learning process is finding what you like and what you don't like. Along the way, you'll have fun picking the winners and losers.

Ratings and favorable reviews are all very helpful clues as to quality and/or value, but the credibility of the rating source is often questionable or biased and therefore not always impartial.

The Feedback Form

So, just where is the best place to learn about wine? Reading about wine and attending tastings certainly can help to raise your wine IQ. Still, however, the best place to learn about wine and what you like is at your favorite bar or restaurant.

Operators usually feature wines by the glass for everyday consumption that appeal to the entry-level consumer, the somewhat experienced wine fan as well as the connoisseur. As with everything in life, the better you want to drink, the more you are going to pay. So, if you're just beginning, it should be pretty affordable.

Always start by ordering a glass of water, because it's important to cleanse your palate before you begin to taste wine. Try the wine by itself. Take a moment to reflect on the total experience with all six senses. OK, do you like it? If so, why? If not, why? Next, try some food that the waitperson suggests pairs well with your wine. Now, how does the wine taste? Is it better, the same or worse with the food? Repeat the process every time you taste wine, but you must take notes for review.

To facilitate comparison and standardize your process, I highly recommend you desktop publish a simple form you can fold, carry in your pocket and complete while you taste wine that answers the following:

Date/Time/Location
Weather
Name of Wine/Origin (California, Australia, France, etc.)
Vintage/Non-Vintage
Food(s) with which I tasted it
Did I like it? Why or why not?

I suggest you try the following types of wine at the base level pricing and in the following order (first without food and then with wine-friendly food):

- Pinot Grigio
- Sauvignon Blanc
- Chardonnay
- Merlot
- Pinot Noir
- Cabernet Sauvignon



Shiraz

For each wine you find to be too sweet, ask the server for another of that type that is slightly more dry. Chances are it will be the next most expensive wine of that type (i.e., Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon or whatever).

Stop when you get to the one that is just right or if you just don't like any expression of that varietal, and you can see the research is going nowhere fast. Simply cross it off your list and move on.

If you keep experimenting as I have outlined along your wine path, over time you will have found what you like and what you don't like — but beware — our palates have a funny way of chang-



To start with,
ask yourself,
'What do I like
that I've tried?'

It's a place to start,
plain and simple.

ing as we mature, so the trick is to never stop experimenting. This eventually will lead you to new varietals such as Riesling, Pinot Gris, Viognier, (red) Zinfandel, Syrah, Pinotage, Malbec, Rioja and so forth. With wine horizons truly global and ever expanding now, the possibilities virtually are as endless as they are profitable.

When it comes to sales and getting a successful wine program started in your bar, club or lounge, there is nothing quite like the power of conviction in your voice as you not only recommend a wine to a customer, but do so with confidence grounded in experience. That only comes with lots of practice. What are you waiting for? Here's to success.

NCB

A large advertisement for the BarBoss Advantage blender. The top half features a black and white image of the blender with a glass of frozen drink. The bottom half features a black and white image of a smiling bartender in a white shirt pouring a drink. Text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

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