

After Wine

Re-thinking After Dinner Drinking

After Wine

What is an after dinner drink? Quite simply, it is a drink with which to finish a meal. Traditionally these were high strength, often wine based drinks which aided digestion. Nowadays diners may have a sweet wine or even a cocktail after their main course, but are less likely to stay long after dessert.

We are therefore inventing a new name for the after dinner drink – ‘After Wine’, defined roughly as a drink consumed after the last glass of still wine, enjoyed after the main course.

And why do we care about After Wine? Quite simply it is a potentially profitable category that can delight customers, but is often sold in a way that does not promote many of the traditional spirits options.

The After Wine concept looks at how any restaurant can actively and knowledgeably sell an inclusive range of drinks immediately after the main course.

This could be a sumptuously sticky Dessert Wine, a traditional Cognac, a powerful Armagnac, a palate cleansing Calvados, a fine Port, a decadent Cocktail, a smoky Whisky, or a whole array of liqueurs and other international drinks. Generally this will be served before coffee, often with or even instead of dessert.

Potentially Profitable? Show me the money...

Say you're doing well and your average spend per head is £34, which converts to £20 gross profit. After apportioning fixed costs and taxes this is down to £6, but you're happy as the business is profitable and you take a day off most weeks.

But, by cleverly promoting your dessert menu and matching some well selected drinks, you manage to get this up to £40. Staff and rent costs have not changed, and your customers are going away with a warm feeling in their stomach, and so are you – the £6/cover net profit you were making has gone up to £9.50 and your restaurant is making another forty five grand a year. So an 18% increase in turnover has equated to 58% increase in net profit – who says accountants are boring?!

Okay, you may not agree with the way the numbers are calculated, but the principle is pretty straightforward. For a real life example of how refocusing on the after dinner category has helped profitability, read this case study from the Fox and Anchor in London's Smithfield.

Case Study

The Fox and Anchor is a small 'gourmet hotel pub', serving quality British fare in a traditional fashion.

Frequented by hotel guests and dining customers alike, there was an opportunity to increase the profit they were making from the guests who were already finding their way to the tables. Bibendum's After Wine program was perfect for the job.

After conducting the training session found in this booklet, all staff were involved in a tasting of After Wine drinks and a selection of their desserts.

This gave their team first-hand experience of dessert matching, enabling them to make personal recommendations to their diners. After reaching a consensus as to which drinks worked best with which desserts, they simply reprinted their dessert menus to include the new selection and suggested a drink with each dessert, such as Plantation Grande Reserve Rum with Strawberry and Shortcake Ice-cream."

This approach was applied to all of the items on their dessert list, and the results were impressive.



Results

- Around one in four evening diners ordered the suggested drink with their dessert choice
- The average GP% made on the After Wine sales was 79%
- An average £4.50 was added to each cover ordering the After Wine drink, £3.55 gross profit
- The growth was from incremental sales of the new spirits listed, existing sales of sweet wine and fortified were not reduced.
- In just one week, this made an extra profit of over £380. That's twenty grand extra in the bank per year for a couple of hours work!

What the team said:

"As soon as we'd finished the After Wine training session I felt more confident selling things I was unsure about before"

"It's great being able to recommend something you've tried yourself"

"With the drinks listed on the menu, there's no danger of forgetting what goes with what. Half the time, customers just ask for it!"



The After Wine Concept

The After Wine concept is a different way of thinking about the after dinner drinks category, and principally considers how drinking habits have changed.

The primary difference in approach to the traditional digestif model is to actively and knowledgably offer an inclusive range of drinks immediately after the main course.

To keep things simple, this is broken down in to what the customer is offered, what the customer sees, and what the customer hears.

What the Customer is Offered

The selection of drinks offered is a fundamental part of the After Wine experience. Few restaurants are lucky enough to regularly sell a dessert wine, followed by coffee, followed by a brandy. More likely the focus will have been on the dessert wines which, as delicious as they may be, are not appreciated by everyone. So, by offering a well selected, inclusive range, a wider audience is targeted and sales will increase.

There is no definitive answer to what selection is perfect for any type of business, but common sense prevails – an appropriate number of selections to suit the style of venue; national wines, spirits and liqueurs; food matches, cocktails, etc. The important thing is to focus on a small number of well selected drinks, and promote them well.

1. Brands versus Boutique

The same values should be considered when looking at the full After Wine selection as the wine list. Big brands aim for consistency and large marketing budgets so are unlikely to over-deliver customer experience, whereas a well selected 'boutique' brand can provide exceptional customer experience and value for money. Basically, if you have spent time developing a great wine list, do the same for the After Wine list.

2. Dare to be Different

The After Wine selection is a great opportunity to differentiate your offer from the local competition without significantly increasing stock holding, and if these sales are incremental to existing core business then the majority of profit falls straight to the bottom line. This allows flexibility to offer great value for money, promotional offers, or quirky selections.

What the Customer Sees

Merchandising is a multi-million pound industry, but if you spend some time thinking about what your customer sees when they visit your restaurant, you can be an expert merchandiser yourself. The principal is simple – make sure your customer sees the products you most want to sell them, most clearly, at the time when they are most likely to be influenced to buy them.

With After Wine, the areas to consider are:

1. The Wine List

Wine lists are great; people read them and order wine. The better it is compiled, the more wine you sell – they are the number one merchandising tool for wine. But, and this is a big but, they are read at the start of the meal so are not very good for after dinner drinks.



If this is the only menu you can use, make sure there is a clearly marked section with after dinner drinks, not just dessert wines, and that this is given back to the customer with the dessert menu (don't ask, just give it to them!).

Better still, have a separate after dinner list with a short but perfectly formed range of stickies, fortified, spirits and liqueurs, to give your customer something new to read.

Make sure you provide a description of each drink to give the customer a reason to buy them - a list of well know spirits is unlikely to influence what your customer chooses.

2. The Dessert Menu

Now you are talking! By including drinks on your dessert list, you are creating a clear link to your customer. You can also provide recommendations to encourage experimentation. Again, try to have a description of the product as this is an area where many consumers know less than they used to. If you don't have much room, just focus the description on a couple of 'recommended' products.

3. The Specials Board

This is a highly visible way of promoting your classiest drinks. Try rotating your offer, matching say a dessert wine and a boutique spirit to different desserts.

4. The Bar

The bar remains a visible sight in many restaurants and should be regularly reviewed for how it looks to the customers. Consider how your diner sees the bar – what part of the bar can they see from the dining area; where is the 'hot spot' (ie where the eye sees most clearly) when walking past to go to the toilet, etc? If the bar is not visible from the dining room, consider putting in a display cabinet.

5. The Facilities

Most customers will spend time at some point during their visit with a trip to the toilet or outside for a cigarette. As this is likely to be later in the evening, there may be an opportunity to promote your dessert list, and of course if you are promoting your dessert list you may also want to promote your dessert drinks.

So in short – make sure the customer sees your dessert list and after dinner drinks selection; highlight the products you want to sell them; include a well selected range; present them in a way that promotes the drinks. Think of the After Wine list as a smaller version of the wine list.

What the Customer Hears

Training, training, training. With a little knowledge, killer timing, and confidence from practice, selling in a restaurant can be incredibly effective and add to the diner's experience. Selling the right product will leave your customer impressed, not more concerned about the size of their bill.

It only takes one phrase to sell a product, and a recommendation made with conviction is hard to turn down. Would you say no if you were told "We've found this amazing local ice-cream, hand made using seasonal fruit from their farm. The crunchy apple is fantastic - I like to have it with a shot of zingy calvados poured over the top".

Training should include basic product knowledge and tasting, with an aim to develop simple one line 'hooks' and personal recommendations. Even if you are part of a large chain, the more that the staff member develops their own view the better – confidence and passion will sell much more than taught phrases.

Training may be in-depth and delivered by an external specialist, such as your supplier or an independent training body, or internally by a member of your team.

Some tips:

External training

- Make sure you know what the purpose of the training is - training should always aim to permanently change behaviour
- Agree an agenda with the trainer and the areas YOU want to focus on
- Get the basics right before you move to the next level. If you are serving something badly, selling a more expensive version of the same thing will just annoy your customer even more
- Your supplier is an expert in their field – don't be afraid to use their knowledge before paying for an expensive consultant, but do make sure you are not getting a biased view
- Training is not free but can improve your bottom line much more than just paying a little less for a product

Internal Training

- Be prepared. Have an outline plan of your training and know your subject. There are some simple definitions of the main after dinner drinks at the back of this booklet, plus we have developed a more detailed set of training notes for you to use. If there is an area in which you are not well versed, a few minutes on the internet can make you an expert!
- Little and often. Don't try to cover everything in a single session. Regular after shift get togethers can be fun and motivating for your staff. There is no silver bullet with training and overloading your staff will reduce retention
- Use your staff knowledge. You would be amazed to find out what your staff know. Whether you have a bourbon geek in your mist, or your quietest member of staff passionately wants to become a master sommelier, you won't know if you don't give them a chance to speak. Try rotating who leads training, or hold an open floor to work through some of the brands on your back bar – "what do you know about our gin brands, who wants to start with Beefeater?"
- Try it. If your staff have not tried a product, they won't be as good at selling it. Simple. If you are worried about how much stock you will use, hand round a single glass for staff to nose, then they can use a straw (finger on the top) to allow very small samples to be drawn without contaminating the liquid
- Have fun. Involving your staff will be motivating, encourage them to stay, and improve their effectiveness



After Wine – Training Guide

Cognac & Armagnac...

Are both special types of brandy, which are made by distilling wine. They are made according to strict rules and regulations in restricted areas to the north and south of Bordeaux respectively.

Drink with:

Chocolate, stone fruit, orchard fruit, cream based desserts, or with coffee as a digestif. Armagnac can also be served with foie gras, duck or prunes.

Serving:

- Brandy snifter (balloon), clean, at room temperature
- Serve neat

Age Classification:

VS= 2 years, VSOP= 4 years (Armagnac 5 years), XO = 6 years

These are the minimum age for the youngest brandy in the blend and will contain older stock as well. Often XO will contain brandy up to 30 or 40 years old.

Cognac

- Must be double distilled
- Silky and smooth
- Whilst young tastes floral and fruity
- Matures to be more complex and rounder

Best areas of production are Grande and Petite Champagne, with chalky soils just like in Champagne, and Borderies with deep clay soil.

Armagnac

- Usually single distilled using wine from a variety of grapes
- Generally more robust and fiery
- Often aged longer than Cognac so can be better value for money than Cognac

The best area is Bas Armagnac in Gascony - the land of the Musketeers.

In 1410, 700 years ago, Prior Vital Du Four, a Cardinal, wrote that Armagnac had 40 virtues - "It makes disappear redness and burning of the eyes, and stops them from tearing; it cures hepatitis, sober consumption adhering. It cures gout, cankers, and fistula by ingestion; restores the paralysed member by massage; and heals wounds of the skin by application. It enlivens the spirit, partaken in moderation, recalls the past to memory, renders men joyous, preserves youth and retards senility. And when retained in the mouth, it loosens the tongue and emboldens the wit, if someone timid from time to time himself permits."

Calvados

Is also a type of brandy, but is made from apples rather than grapes. As such, it is a cider which is distilled, rather than wine. The Calvados region is home to more than 7 million apple trees – one for every man, woman in London!

- Made in the north of France (Normandy)
- Made from apples, sometimes with some pear as well
- Calvados Pays d'Auge is the best area, which demands double distillation
- Fine Calvados should be fresh and refreshing, whereas aged Calvados should have developed rich caramelised apple flavours.

Drink with:

Calvados is a versatile spirit and can be served before, during, after, or between courses. Le Trou Normand refers to drinking Calvados between courses, sometimes with an apple sorbet, to reawaken the palette. Can also be served with

- Orchard fruit based desserts
- Cheese boards
- Sorbets

Serving:

Serve at room temperature in a brandy snifter (balloon).

Age Classification:

Fine= 2 years, VO/VSOP= 4 years, XO or Hors d'Age = 6 years (minimum ages)

Rum

Originated as a by product of the sugar industry. By fermenting the treacle left over from sugar refining (molasses), a sweet beer is produced, which is then distilled to make rum. Widely produced around the Caribbean, each area has its own typical style.

Up until 1970, every sailor in the Royal Navy was issued a daily ration of Rum. In the 18th Century, this was half a pint!

- White rum is completely clear, and most often unaged, but may be filtered
- Gold rum is sometimes aged in oak barrels, but sometimes just coloured with caramel to give that appearance
- Dark rum, sometimes called navy rum, tends to be sweeter

Drink with:

- As a sugar derivative, rum is delicious with any sweet dish.
- Tropical flavours make especially good matches: pineapple, melon, coconut...
- Berries are also good: blackberry, raspberry and strawberry in particular

Serving:

Rum is very versatile, and can be served neat in a snifter, or a whisky glass with or without ice, or mixed.

Whisky

Is thought to have originated in Ireland, but is of course now more often associated with Scotland. In fact, whisky is now made all over the world, including Japan and New Zealand.

Scotch whisky must be distilled and aged in Scotland, and is most commonly either:

- Single malt : whisky made entirely from barley in a single distillery
- Blended whisky: made by combining different whiskies together.

In general terms, single malts can be divided into different categories according to where they're from: Lowland, Highland, Islay, Speyside, Campbeltown and Islands, each with their own characteristics.

Bourbon whiskey comes from America, and is made with corn and other grains. It is usually sweeter than other whiskies, and is spelt with an 'e'.

Grappa

Is distilled from grape pomace, essentially the leftovers of wine production. It usually hails from Northern Italy, where the climate is cool enough to produce grapes with high acidity.

Serving:

- Small, clean tulip shaped glass
- Serve unaged grappa chilled (10°C)
- Serve aged grappa at room temperature (18°C)

Drink with:

Coffee or after dessert as a classic digestif.

Drink with

- Peaty single malts work well with dark chocolate
- Lighter single malts, such as Lowland or Speyside, work well with honey, orange and apricot
- Bourbon whiskey's sweeter profile compliments vanilla, caramel and cream

Serving:

Whisky drinkers are a particular bunch, so if in doubt, leave it out!

- Use a clean, short glass at room temperature
- Ice and water should be served separately for the customer to add themselves

Age Classification

An age statement (e.g. '12 years') on a bottle tells you the age of the youngest part of the whisky, though it may be mixed with other, much older elements.



Dessert Wines

Are sweet wines with the sweetness occurring either naturally, though the removal of water to concentrate the sugar, or through fortification.

Drink With:

The basic rule is to select a wine that is sweeter than the dessert, but sweet wines with higher acidity can also be paired with salty food such as foie gras or blue cheese. The variety of sweet wines is huge so careful selection of food and wine can create a perfect harmony.

Some classic matches are Vin Santo with biscuits, Muscat with fruit desserts, chocolate with a sweet red wine such as Maury, cheese with a low tannin sweet red wine or tawny port, blue cheese with Sauternes or vinsanto, Pedro Ximenez poured over ice cream.

Serving:

As with table wine, white dessert wine should be chilled, and red at room temperature or slightly chilled. Serve in a small glass.

Main sweet wine styles:

Natural Sweetness

Late Harvest

Wines are made from grapes that have naturally higher sugar content. They may have started to dehydrate, concentrating the sugars in the fruit.

Naturally dehydrated

or Raisin Wine, use a dried grape with concentrated sugars but the dehydration occurs off the vine. They are also called Straw Wine as they are often dried on a bed of straw.

The best know styles are:

- Vin Santo – ‘Holy Wine’ from Tuscany (normally white)
- Vinsanto – any sweet wine from Santorini in Greece
- Recioto della Valpolicella (red)
- Recioto di Soave (white)
- Vin de Paille (literally Straw Wine in French)
- Pedro Ximenez sherry is a raisin wine that is fortified and aged

Noble Rot

Wines are made from grapes that have been affected by Botrytis, a mould that causes the grape to lose nearly all its water. Botrytis occurs naturally in damp conditions but is very hard to create deliberately, and the yields can be very low, making for very expensive wines. Although this can occur anywhere in the world, including Australia and Chile, the countries that are known best for noble rot are:

- France - Sauternes
- Germany - Beerenauslese
- Hungary - Tokaji

Fortification

Vins Doux Naturel results in higher sweetness as the addition of high alcohol grape spirit stops fermentation before all the sugar is turned into alcohol

- Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise or de Rivesaltes is a lightly fortified white wine using Muscat, from the South of France
- Banyuls or Maury is a lightly fortified red wine using Grenache, from the South of France

Liqueurs

Are spirits which have been sweetened and coloured or flavoured. They come in many different flavours, some traditional recipes such as Limoncello, and some more modern concoctions, seen as the rainbow of colours adorning most bars. The oldest are forms of herbal medicines, where monasteries created the liqueurs to allow the healing properties of herbs to be stored and transported.

The base for the liqueur may be a neutral spirit, where the flavour from the ingredients is unlimited, or may be from a flavoursome spirit such as whisky (Drambuie) or Cognac (Grand Marnier) where the ingredients are selected to complement the spirit.

Drink With:

Most liqueurs have a dominant flavour so complementing flavours is easy. Bitter or citrus based liqueurs are often drunk alone or with coffee as a traditional digestif.

Serving:

Often served chilled or over ice, or even over a frozen dessert

All liqueurs can be divided into four categories:

- Dairy:** Baileys
- Kernel (nut):** Amaretto, Frangelico, Malibu, Tia Maria, Sambuca
- Herb:** Chartreuse, Galliano, Benedictine
- Fruit:** Archers, Chambord, Cointreau, Grand Marnier.

Fortified Wines

Are wines with spirit added to increase strength (usually around 20%). There are many different styles, and methods of producing them. The main ones include:

Port, from Nothern Portugal.

- Most often sweet and red, white variations also exist.

Sherry, from Jerez, Spain

- Fino is the driest, Manzanilla is light, Amontillado is darker and richer, and Oloroso richer still. Pedro Ximenez is a very sweet style of Sherry.

Maderia, an island off Portugal

- Effectively a ‘cooked’ wine, aged for long period.

Drink With:

Sherry is often consumer as an aperitif, but the richer styles such as Oloroso matches well with a caramel or nutty dessert.

Port is classically served with a cheese-board, just avoid serving young Port with high tannins.

Serving:

As dessert wine.

For more detailed training notes on the production of spirits, please visit www.bibendum-spirits.co.uk



Food Matching

While food matching may be approached with a degree of creativity, a few selections are suggested below



Dessert

Poached Peach, Almond Biscuits

Rich Chocolate

Bitter, Smoky Chocolate

Milk Chocolate

White Chocolate

Cheese Board

Ice Cream

Citrus eg Lemon Tart

Custard eg Panna Cotta

Sorbet

Sweet and Creamy eg Tiramisu

Nutty eg Pecan Pie

Creamy eg Fresh Fruit Trifle

Dried Fruit based

Rich Apple based eg Tarte Tartin

Cheesecake

Rum infused – Rum Baba

Caramel or Toffee

Chilli Infused

Espresso Coffee Infused

Spotted Dick

Fresh Fruit

Partner

Most Dessert Wines

Cognac, Vintage Port, Muscat

Single Malt, aged Armagnac

Royal Tokaji, Muscat, Tawny Port

Gewurtztraminer, Riesling, Muscat

Port, Sweet Wines (Blue Cheese)
Calvados

Pedro Ximenez

Muscat, Limoncello

Italian Liqueur or Sparkling Wine

Fruit Eaux de Vie, Vodka, Calvados

Rum, Cognac

Oloroso sherry, Madeira, Armagnac

Fortified Muscat, aged Tawny Port,
Sherry used in Trifle

Late Harvest Viognier, Cognac, Rum

Aged Calvados

Sauternes

Rum

Royal Tokaji, Madeira, Oloroso Sherry,
Sauternes, Tawny Port, Whiskey

Ruby Port

Oloroso Sherry, Coffee or Liqueur

Armagnac or Whiskey

Dessert Wine, Rum, Calvados, Cocktails

