



# The Top 7 Ways to Sell More Wine

We have all heard stories of restaurants that are able to increase their wine revenues by up to 20% over a short period of time. This is remarkable considering consumer confidence is still not yet on the rise and our next generation of wine enthusiasts is just graduating from college with conservative salaries. In this economic environment, it is necessary to become increasingly savvy at leveraging the tools we have to build consumer loyalty and make a better sale.

The good news is that there are literally *millions* of customers who are already interested in buying wine! According to the Wine Market Council's annual consumer tracking reports, the consumption of table wine in the US was up in 2011 (Consumer Wine Trends: Overall Consumption Up, Nichols, 02/02/12). This study went on to report that "21 percent of all adult core wine drinkers, drinkers who consume wine daily or several times a week, represent 47 million people; [and there are] another 34 million people who are marginal wine drinkers, totaling at 81 million wine drinkers in the U.S."

Wow, **81 million potential customers** waiting to be sold their next great bottle! In this article we will share some strategies for engaging all wine consumers by understanding how to appeal to each individual segment of the consumer population. Total engagement will increase consumer interest which will lead to more winning sales.



*Invest in delivering the right information to your prospective customer at the time of their purchase.*

There is no substitute for a knowledgeable and passionate employee to interface with your prospective wine consumer. Making the investment in a properly trained and accredited sommelier can really pay dividends.

A professional sommelier with accreditations from programs such as the Master Sommelier program at [www.mastersommeliers.org](http://www.mastersommeliers.org) or the Epicurean Institute at [www.epicureaninstitute.com](http://www.epicureaninstitute.com) receive salaries between \$30,000 and \$75,000 per year, according to salary.com. In a successful restaurant, this investment provides a beneficial value because the sommelier is a wine expert who can craft a great list, is a qualified taster who can pass on his or her knowledge to your prospective clients and is a credible salesperson.



## *Invest in an iPad-based wine menu software solution.*

You can buy a wifi-enabled iPad for as little as \$400. Some restaurants are using them as a tool for their servers to consult while other restaurants have enough iPad menus to distribute to all customers. A third option is to simply use the iPad wine menu to entice bar-area customers.

The fact is, you can leverage this technology and use it to your advantage. The iPad is intuitive, it is sleek and it provides a visual experience with label art displays and engaging menus that are easy to filter and navigate. A wine menu software system is always up to date, hiding information about wines that are sold out.

A good wine menu software solution will also provide you with back-office reporting to enable inventory evaluation. Your wine menu system should easily allow you to analyze your pricing strategy, print paper menus, as needed, and provide inventory reporting such as low stock and total inventory value.

The iPad is a device that has been embraced by the world...it is everywhere and the technology is familiar to almost your entire prospective customer base. *According to Apple Inc., they sold 15 million iPads in Q1 of 2012 alone and have sold over 67 million iPad devices since the first release in 2010.* Even my 70-year-old father in law is using one! Based on the widespread growth of iPads, it is safe to say that in less than 5 years the iPad-based wine menu will be the new “normal” and in 10 years our kids will be saying, “remember when Dad used a paper menu to order his wine?” Why not jump on board now to differentiate your restaurant?



## *Know your wine audience.*

If you have a Bud Light crowd, don't stock up with expensive Napa Cabernet! Find a few great value wines that will wow those who prefer wine. And, here is the good news: there are plenty of value-oriented choices that can complement every type of cuisine from pizza to burgers to Thai.

With an investment of time and some research, you can construct a profitable wine list consisting entirely of good value wine. The first step toward creating your winning wine list is to answer the following questions:

- What is the best price point for my customer?
- What are my best selling 5 to 10 dishes?
- What type of profit margin do I expect from the wine sales?

With these 3 simple answers, a saavy wine professional can help you construct a set of customized choices that fit both you and your customers. By allowing your wine audience to drive the decisions you make, you can craft a wine list that will appeal to the majority of your customers and will be more profitable for your restaurant.



## *Make your wine list and wine choices inviting but encourage exploration.*

Once you understand your target market, create a range of wine offerings around your targeted wine sale. Provide enough wines above *and* below your expected average purchase to accommodate all experiences.

There are thousands of wines available! Some are meant for sipping and some require food. If you have a bar area with appetizers, include fun and interesting wines that are carefree. On the other hand there are many heavier wines that need to be enjoyed with food. I remember when we were in Italy and started to drink a glass of red wine without any food. Our Italian host almost jumped over the counter to stop us, then he cut a piece of Parmesan and said, "OK, now you can drink this wine." Offer a collection of more serious wines that will really pop with food to create a memorable wine and dine experience.

Offer to provide a taste of a wine to encourage the guest to try something new. And finally, be sure to link specific wines to appetizers, dinner specials or entrée choices; pairing options provide your guests with a reason to explore.



## *Education is the key to YOUR success.*

Consumers are not afraid to buy good or expensive wine...they are afraid to buy wine that they know nothing about. Your customer needs to feel informed and empowered when choosing.

Whether picking an inexpensive bottle of wine for pizza or indulging in a special bottle of wine to celebrate an occasion, nobody wants to make a blind choice. Many customers choose a less expensive bottle of wine because they don't know enough about a wine or enough about what they like and are intimidated by the wine menu.

An educated wine staff can offer guidance while building a relationship of trust with the consumer. Take the time to research wines and keep a searchable "cheat sheet" for each wine on your list. These wine hints should contain tasting notes, menu pairings, professional ratings, and vineyard information.

Whether the customer wants to drink Pinot Grigio with a rib eye or Cabernet Sauvignon with sea bass, the point is for every guest feel good about their choice. Provide your staff with the tools they need to provide relevant information to your guest. An educated consumer will feel empowered, will trust your wine list and will want to buy good wine from you.



## ***Engage your consumer in a way that triggers their personal response style.***

Every consumer has an individual mix of response styles for absorbing new information. Some consumers respond to speech, others must read to understand and there is a third type of response style that requires touching and doing. As wine stewards, you must be aware of each consumer's style and present your wine in a way that triggers a positive response.

Your wine list cannot be a one-dimensional and fearful tome. It must provide a combination of visual and tactile interaction. An inviting menu layout, pictures of the wine label or bottle, and vineyard descriptions can combine with a server's guidance to lead consumers to a choice that will create a memorable experience.

If you want your guest to absorb the information, your server or wine professional must be a tour guide. Lead the consumer through the wine buying process in a way that provides the right mix of the three styles and results in a positive experience.



## ***Make your wine list a tool of invitation not a tool of intimidation.***

Nobody gets rich from a first time buyer. So, use your wine list as an opportunity to develop long-term relationships with your customers. In great restaurants, repeat guests will visit you for various reasons; a quick drink and an appetizer, an early bite or a leisurely/event meal. If you can accommodate all experiences in a way that is inviting, the guest will return.

Create engaging wine entries by suggesting wine and food pairings, providing anecdotes about the vineyard or supplying professional ratings. With an engaging wine menu, your customer is going to want to visit your restaurant regularly to try something new or enjoy something previously discovered.

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***Offer the right wine, at the right time to the right person and watch wine sales increase.***

Questions? Contact us at: [info@corkguru.com](mailto:info@corkguru.com) or visit us on the web [www.corkguru.com](http://www.corkguru.com)

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