

A GUIDE TO SERVING ALCOHOL AT YOUR EVENTS



WRITTEN BY TRACY FULLER
www.Innovativeevents.com



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About the Author



Some people are born to follow a specific career path, and some people are born to forge their own path. Those people are called entrepreneurs. Tracy Fuller became an entrepreneur 27 years ago when she started her first company, Happy Occasions, in response to a personal tragedy. Nearly three decades later, she leads the team at InnovativEvents, providing event decor, backstage management, and overall coordination and management of all production aspects. She has produced dozens of corporate events – sometimes for an intimate group of corporate board members, other times for crowds as large as 3,000. There are definitely some nice benefits; she has worked with Elton John, Bon Jovi, and Keith Urban and companies like Google, Oracle and Allstate Insurance.



Serving Alcohol at Events

By now you're probably aware alcohol is expected at most events. People may feel more comfortable with a drink in their hand when networking and socializing. However, serving alcohol at your special events is not as simple as one might think; there are many moving parts that need to be addressed. We'll cover a number of the specifics — and cautions — in this guide.

Alcohol consumption can, at times, be a double-edged sword. I've been at sales events where booze made the event a huge "love fest" where everyone was flirting with anyone and everyone. Sounds fun, until one couple ended up fighting and the husband was locked out of the room all night. That was NOT fun. Luckily attendee drama has been the worst of our experiences when dealing with alcohol at events. There are many worse situations that can arise if you do not have a plan in place on how to safely serve libations and what to do if a problem does arise.

Alcohol can be an incentive when people are considering whether or not to attend an event. As we said previously, alcohol can help lighten the mood and ease conversation. Serving alcohol can also be an additional form of revenue. And anyone who has ever been to a fundraising events knows a few drinks can loosen the purse strings and get guests to bid on auction items!

We became involved with a fundraising event that was barely squeaking by. They were only raising enough funds to cover the event. By adding alcohol and a great piece of entertainment, we were able to increase the donations by 30% the first year and continue to see a consistent increase year after year. This once struggling event is now a signature event in the city and tickets sell out almost before they go on sale!

Getting creative with your drinks can be a major highlight of the event, especially if your signature drink is tied to your theme.

We love serving drinks in an unexpected or funky way but know the rules of the venue you're working with. A planner we know designed three drinks that fit her client's theme for the night. One of these drinks was meant to be lit on fire as it was served to guests - a "fireball". Unfortunately she didn't check with the venue and her big wow turned into a big dud when she wasn't allowed to actually light them.

It's important to know what you're getting yourself into when alcohol will be included in your event, and how to do so in a safe, professional manner — while bringing the Wow!



Consider the Plan

“ A GOOD RULE OF THUMB IS TO HAVE ONE BAR FOR EVERY 100 PEOPLE ”



Of course the first thing you need to know is the number of expected attendees. This will help guide the amount of alcohol you order along with supplies (cups, ice, etc.), and will determine the number of bars and bartenders needed to keep people happy and moving. A good rule of thumb is to have one bar for every 100 people. However, if you have a higher-end event and you want to make sure your guests are served without standing in line, have a bar for every 75 guests.

Next, consider what drinks you will be serving. Will you have a signature drink? Will that signature drink be top shelf? How many staff do you need? Will you have servers to meet your guest when they enter to alleviate the rush to the bar? Will this be a cash bar, wine and beer free with cash for hard liquor, or an entire hosted bar? You can also do a combination of free beer and wine for the first two hours and then charge later on. These choices are driven by the reason you are having the event, the theme, or the desired outcome. All should be taken into consideration when planning your event.

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Know Your Liability

Know how to protect yourself and your client

Know your liability risk! If you are serving the drinks yourself, make sure you are covered. For this, you will need dram insurance. Dram insurance is legal coverage for the service of alcohol. The best and safest way to make sure you are covered is to hire a catered or a professional bar service to handle this element of your event. Each state will vary and you need to look to your attorney and insurance agent to make sure you are fully covered.

For extra precaution when providing drinks yourself, have your servers go through alcohol management training. This will ensure anyone handling the alcohol is aware of the proper procedures to serve and sell alcohol, as well as knowing what to do in the case of overly intoxicated guests, including the best way to intercede.

Many venues will insist that you use them for bar services and will handle this for you as well. Off-site properties may require applying for a liquor license which may require going to a city or county board to get permission. Plan this early on and get with your caterer to get this ironed out in timely manner.

Click the link below to see what your state requires:



<http://www.ncsl.org/research/financial-services-and-commerce/dram-shop-liability-state-statutes.aspx>

A note on event insurance

While we are on the topic of liability, make sure you are covered for all things that could possibly go wrong prior to or during your event. Not only do you need to be insured due to the alcohol, you need to be insured for all sorts of things that could go awry on the event. This includes tripping and other hazards that may become an issue after having a few drinks. There are several ways to get event insurance. I suggest discussing this with your agent or looking online.

If you aren't to the point of starting a business handling events, you can purchase event insurance for one event at a time.

Click the link below:



https://www.kandkinsurance.com/sites/Events/Pages/Home.aspx?gclid=Cj0K-CQiA2NXTBRDoARIsAJRlvLwg8o0pfem_RdRFtO_m-l4Euplf4ZAIT7R0T0hXaf-HUuESw7FvXyn8aAoDfEALw_wcB



Know Your Liability

Hiring bartenders

There are always those clients that will want to handle their own liquor. In this case, there are bartending services available that they should be made aware of. Make sure you check to see if they have a liquor license before signing the contract or giving them a deposit.

Monitoring Alcohol

There may be some instances where you want to monitor the amount of alcohol that guests are consuming. This can include if there will be minors present or if you want to limit consumption for other reasons. If so, try wristbands or tickets to give to your guests. Tickets are a great way to limit consumption and control your budget. If you want to discourage guests from over indulging, having an officer present should do the trick. They can also help if any guests become out of control. This precaution is valuable whenever serving alcohol. To meet city and state requirements, check with your local law enforcement.

If you want to separate those guests who you feel may get rowdy from the calmer ones, you may choose to have alcohol-free zones within the event. To make it less obvious that you are controlling areas where alcohol is consumed, have a beer garden where guests can sit and enjoy a drink but cannot leave the area with the drink in their hand.

Make sure that you ask for and receive a liquor license from your caterer or Bartending Company. This should be kept in your event portfolio.

Drunk Driving

Drunk driving is an important concern to have as you always want to ensure the safety of your guests at each and every one of your events. How do you prevent it? Well you can't watch each and every attendee, so here are a few tips:

- Hire a valet service and ask them to alert you of anyone that has overindulged
- As previously stated have an officer or two on location to monitor any potential dangerous behavior
- Make sure servers know not to continue to serve alcohol to anyone who has had too much and alert anyone if they are concerned for the person's safety
- Have the phone number to your local cab company readily available for guests or help arrange an Uber service
 - Be prepared to pay for the cab ride to insure safety, this is a low cost assurance that your attendees make it home safely

“HAVE THE
PHONE
NUMBER TO
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CAB COMPANY
READILY
AVAILABLE”



Alcohol Consumption

Wine



50%

We are going to start with some assumptions for just a minute. Let's say you are having a four hour party with 200 guests. How much alcohol do you need? This will vary on the type of event and your attendees, but here are some guidelines you can start with:

Bottle Size and Servings

One bottle of wine: (750mL) will service about 4 servings, sometimes 5 (this depends on your glass size and bartender)

One bottle of hard liquor (750mL) will serve about 18 servings (1.5 oz.) — again, how your bartender pours will have a significant impact on how many mixed drinks you can get out of one bottle.

A bottle of beer: one serving

A standard sized keg: 165 servings on average

Boxed or bagged wine: Boxed wine usually comes in three sizes. A 1.5-liter box of wine will produce 10 5-oz. servings of wine. A 3.0-liter box of wine will produce 20 servings, and a 5.0-liter box will yield 33 servings.

Liquor



30%

Determining How Much You'll Need

If your crowd is full of beer drinkers, adjust accordingly. If this is a high-end event, wine will probably be more important to your event than beer but you will still want to have beer.

If this is a hosted bar, you can choose to serve beer and wine only; guests can go out afterwards to get the hard stuff.

Here are some guidelines to go by:

Beer and wine only: 75% wine / 25% beer

Modified full bar: 50% wine, 20% beer, and 30% liquor

Plan on one serving per person, per hour of your event.

Beer



20%

Party Time Example:

200 guests for 4 hours = 800 servings (1 serving per person per hour)



400 servings of wine (100 bottles)



240 servings of liquor (14 bottles)



160 servings of beer (160 bottles)



Alcohol Consumption



Wine (one of my favorite subjects)

Summer — If you are serving wine in the summertime vary your services to double the white but still offer a red for those hardcore red wine drinkers. If it is really hot out and your guests are melting, your cold white wine will go faster, make that much faster than the red so plan accordingly. Hot days will also encourage beer drinkers.

Wintertime – Keep the red nearby but probably a 50/50 split would be in order.

Signature Drinks

If you decide to offer a signature drink, decrease the amount for the wine and beer by one hour's worth or one per person. Make sure you have a signature drink for each and every attendee for that first hour, but have the bar open as well.

If your event is in the south, you might have a signature drink that is more southern. In Mexico it might be margaritas. You can theme the signature drink to the event, vary the alcohol content to save money and even offer a special glass and charge a premium and collect more for your charity event.

If it's extremely cold out, offer a Baileys and coffee or some sort of hot toddy. Offer this at the end of the evening as a final drink and to help get coffee into your guests.

Beer

These days beer has taken on a life of its own so there are a ton of options. Domestic beers are less expensive, but many people really enjoy some of the new craft beers. Consider using the domestics for most of your beers but add one or two local brews or boutique beers to keep your crowd happy. Again, the decisions you make on what beers to buy will depend on your attendees and your budget.

Watch your caterer or alcohol vendor for cost on your beers. Some caterers will try to pass off domestics for specialty beers and charge extra for each bottle. Consider at least having one light beer and one dark beer to provide a variety of options.

“IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO HAVE NON-ALCOHOLIC BEERS AVAILABLE FOR NONDRINKERS”



Alcohol Consumption



Hard Liquor

Some of the most popular types of liquor include: whiskey, gin, vodka, rum and tequila. You can use top shelf or just well drinks. Gauge your attendees to determine which to have available.

Mixers

In the entire hullabaloo about alcohol, make sure you have mixers available as well as some sodas for those that don't drink. Have some orange juice, soda (Pepsi, Coke, Mountain Dew, or clear soda), and tonic water on hand.

Garnishes

At the very minimum make sure your bar has lemons and limes but for a fuller bar add cherries, cucumbers, and olives.

Bubbly

You aren't obligated to serve Champagne and some people do not care for Champagne at all, it all depends on your crowd. Also, does it fit the occasion? If not, skip it.

If you do decide you have a reason to celebrate with bubbles there are a host of options; a few you can look for are Cava from Spain, Prosecco from Italy, and sparkling wine from all sorts of other places.

You will only need 4-5 oz. per person and each bottle will yield about 5 servings. Be sure to consider if you are serving one glass or two.

Be smart with your alcohol and help your guest be responsible. Protect yourself and your business from lawsuits. My best advice is to hire a professional to manage your bar and alcohol.



*FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO
PLAN YOUR NEXT EVENT CONTACT:*



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