

Beer/Wine White Paper

From the “pop” of the champagne cork to raising your glass for a toast alcohol has become an important element to many events. Just as a restaurant or bar has alcohol licensing requirements, so does your event center. This month we sat down with Jim Willoughby and Rob Stratton from Odom Corporation to discuss all sorts of topics related to alcohol for your event. We chose to focus only on beer and wine as that is what Elk Point is currently licensed for.

When it comes to selecting what beer to serve at your event Rob recommends about 60% of your selections be a domestic beer, 25% a craft beer and 15% be an import. Much like at Elk Point, Rob also recommends keeping your choices to a minimum. The more options, the longer the line at the bar and you then run the risk of running out of a favorite. For wine, Jim states that you need to know how much other alcohol is being served and how many guests are actually going to drink wine. From our experience most guests tend to be beer drinkers, although there is the occasional “bizarre” event where the wine crowd far exceeds the beer crowd. Another consideration is weather. If it is going to be warm, your guests are more likely to choose white wines. If it is cold, they are more likely to choose red wines. Of course, you are always going to have some guests that just prefer a white to a red or vice versa. If serving a sparkling wine, prepare for about 20 ounces per person. We usually recommend a case of Wycliff Estates for this option as most guests will not actually consume sparkling wines.

The budget depends on what you plan to serve and how much you want to spend. It can also depend on the volume your guests consume alcohol. Based on our experience approximately 80% of most guests at an event will consume anywhere from 2 to 4 alcoholic beverages during the approximately 5.5 hours that alcohol is being served. Rob recommends having alcohol selections in tiers based on quality. This also allows people to set a budget based upon the menu options available. Keep in mind, on the wine side selections can go from fairly low to extremely high. Like, \$300 a bottle high. Just because a bottle is available at the grocery store for \$9.99, doesn't mean you are going to pay less per glass. Chances are, you will be paying \$9.99 for a glass as once wine is open, the quality begins to degrade. Just something to think about when you order a glass of wine that normally runs \$19.99 at the grocery store.

A question we are often asked is why guests cannot bring in their own alcohol. Much like a bar or restaurant, your event venue is licensed the same way, which in the State of Idaho means we cannot allow outside alcohol. We are often asked about corkage fees. Because of the current system in Idaho we do not charge corkage fees since we do not allow outside alcohol. Another question we are asked is a guest may be able to get a deal on alcohol because their friend works for a distributor. It is actually illegal for a distributor to sell to someone without a beer/wine permit or liquor license. According to Jim there is a three-tier purchasing system in Idaho for Beer and Wine. Purchases must be made from the supplier to the distributor, and from the distributor to the retailer/establishment. Idaho runs this system so that they can keep track of taxes. This is also why we cannot purchase our beer and wine products from the grocery store or a warehouse such as Total Wine or Costco.

The great thing about working with a distributor such as Odom Corporation is that they carry most items in their warehouse, so the lead times are very short. Occasionally there is a request for a strange wine or beer selection that is not available in our area. Because Odom is a national company, they can sometimes procure an item through their network, or recommend a similar item. Of course, this is if the supplier/manufacturer is licensed in the State of Idaho. Much like the grocery store example from earlier, just because something is available in Seattle, or California it does not mean we can procure it in Idaho.

It seems that there are always new trends in the alcohol industry. In both the beer and wine industries Rose's are exploding. Jim feels North Idaho is usually two years behind in beverage trends but states that the Rose' business is moving. And, not just in warm weather, it is booming year around. Rob stated that Rose' has also moved into ciders and is the hottest brand out there. IPA's are still the most popular beer selection with the "Hazy" currently leading the charge. However, there is now a Brut IPA made with champagne hops. Sparkling Seltzers are also real popular, especially on warm days.

At Elk Point we are constantly updating our menu to balance the wide variety of beer and wine palate's that attend events at our venue. We have offered local micro-brews on tap, along with domestic favorites by the bottle. We have also run our wine selection from the very affordable to the more expensive. We have even brought in some unknown varieties based on the requests of guests that many folks would not normally get to taste. We hope to grow our beer and wine programs over the next year to give our guests more choices and experiences when it comes to this booming industry.