



The Wine Bar's Allure: Expanding Its Irresistible Appeal

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At the [wine bar](#), it's all about the wine, right? Well, mostly.

The allure of a fine vino is definitely irresistible. But a wine bar equipped with inviting amenities — like food, savvy staff, a unique ambiance and even educational classes — can heighten the wine-tasting experience and keep customers coming back.

During the last five years, the wine bar industry has grown by 3.8%, resulting in revenues of \$2 billion as 2019 dawned, according to IBISWorld. Such growth indicates that with the right product, aesthetic and atmosphere, a wine bar can be successful and profitable.

Choosing The Best Wine

Ultimately, the success of a wine bar depends on its wine, so choosing carefully is essential.

This involves:

- Identifying quality winemakers, especially smaller, independent and even local, family-run businesses
- Testing the products of these winemakers
- Recognizing what's already on the global market
- Staying up on trends
- Knowing the characteristics of grapes and regions

Building The Right Wine List

The wine list should reflect the fruits of a finely tuned selection and curation process. Thus, the list should:

Provide variety — not just in the type of wine, but also in terms of vintage, region and price range.

Be easy to read and understand. You should list enough to entice and interest, but not overwhelm.

Be finely curated to demonstrate that the wines have been thoughtfully selected and are of high quality.

Be organized by category, varietal, style, theme or origin. It also should be rotated regularly so you continually offer something new to try.

Offering Compelling Embellishments

Wine bar customers want more than the vin ordinaire. They like accoutrements that bring zip and flair to their experience. The following should be at the core of a successful establishment:

Knowledgeable staff. A wine bar needs somebody who really knows wine. A sommelier or two can't hurt. It's just not sufficient to say a wine is "delicious" when an inquisitive guest queries, so a wine-savvy staff is essential to customer satisfaction.

Food. Complementing wine with tasty morsels — seasonal delicacies, desserts and interesting appetizers — is a plus. It adds a taste element that is not only appealing, but also educates customers about wine-food pairings that accentuate flavor all the way around, and elevate the wine-savoring and eating experience.

In her Westword article “Ten Things That Can Make a Good Wine Bar a Great Wine Bar,” Kendra Anderson says a great wine bar can simply serve “fantastic finger-food, some salty, some crunchy, some sweet.” She adds that the snacks must serve as the complement to the wine, “not the other way around.”

Anderson also recommends simple plates of meats, cheeses, nuts and olives.

Glassware. Sure, you can drink wine from anything. However, the vessel – type, size and shape – is imperative to the tasting experience. A wise investment in appropriate glassware — crystal versus glass is an important consideration, for example — for the range of varietals is a must.

Ambiance. Think inviting, welcoming and comfortable.

For example, wine writer Andrea Frost recommends that a wine bar on a main street should be set back from the thoroughfare, away from the hectic rush outside. It should present with a culture of warmth — wood over metal, for example.

The goal is to offer a “sanctuary for aesthetic appreciation” where people slow down, step away from the digital culture and take a moment “to ponder, admire or discuss a glass of wine with company is something closer to important than pleasurable,” Frost says.

The atmosphere should be heightened with:

- Lighting that is aesthetic, but also enables the customer to easily read the wine list and evaluate a wine’s color
- Furniture and seating that encourage intimate interaction as well as solitude
- Music that is subtle, yet loud out enough to hear while not deterring from the pleasure of drinking

Marketing: It’s Mostly About the Customer

The customer should always come first. Consistently putting out a good product is what draws in regulars and helps a wine bar become a fabric of the community.

Avoid vapid promotions that don’t generate a steady and loyal customer base. Instead, try to become a staple of the neighborhood community.

Consider offering:

- Happy-hour tastings targeting specific client niches
- VIP loyalty programs that include special wine tastings where customer favorites become prime “on tap” selections for a time
- A presentation of wine flights with samples of a wine bar’s favorites
- Classes that teach about wine in nonacademic ways and are offered during off-peak hours and days