

For Hotel, Resort, and Casino Food & Beverage Operations

Hotel F&B™

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(L-R) Shawn McGowan, senior director of F&B for full-service brands, Hilton Hotels Corporation; Gary Steffen, VP, brand performance, Doubletree; and Don Molinich, executive chef, Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort.

TWICE As Nice

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The World of Wine, Beer & Spirits

BY FRED TIBBITTS

WHERE LESS IS MORE

Brian Abel, senior director, F&B development, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, sees flexible, easily executed programs as key.

What are the most important elements of a successful beer, wine, and spirits program?

A successful beverage program must have three key characteristics:

1. Easy to execute: In our current program, we are focusing only on high-usage items. Instead of 50 core wines, we will have 10 to 15, which allows us to implement more efficiently and track compliance more effectively.
2. Flexible enough to be used in many types of properties and across different types of hotel brands and segments: The Starwood program provides what we call "freedom in

a framework." F&B directors have the flexibility to tailor their beverage programs to their specific hotels, markets, and clientele, while still taking advantage of cost savings.

3. Measurable: Quantifying success is essential. We will have two key metrics we track: beverage costs and beverage revenues.

How do you intend to distinguish Starwood's new program from the competition?

Starwood is known for having strong brands. We are working in collaboration with our nine hotel brand teams (W, St. Regis, Luxury Collection, Westin, Le Meridien, Sheraton, Four Points by Sheraton, Aloft, and Element) to make sure each brand has a specific focus for beverage offerings. This will be seen through unique specialty cocktail programs and beverage "rituals."

Are wine flights part of your vision for the future, and, if so, how will you approach them?

Since the majority of our beverage revenues are seen

in banquet and catering, we plan to offer a new twist on flights in this arena. Flights are common in restaurants and bars, but no one has done it well for banquets. Starwood sees this as a big, untapped opportunity.

How will the beer, wine, and spirits business change in hotels over the next few years?

I think the importance of quality over quantity will continue to grow. Guest knowledge will continue to increase, and companies must remain ahead of the consumer to be successful. Crafted cocktails will grow, as will attention to details such as good ice. The key will be in mass producing cocktails without losing quality. For wines, I believe there will be larger acceptance of locally grown wines, with new wine regions popping up in North America. 10

Fred Tibbitts & Associates Inc. is a leading wine-by-the-glass consultant, working with and promoting chains around the world. Contact Fred at fredbev@fredtibbitts.com.



Flameless LED Candles

GLOWING IN THE WIND

Cool ocean breezes dance over Hawaii's Big Island as Hilton Waikoloa Village guests gather at dusk to enjoy the breathtaking Pacific sunsets. "We can't operate without candlelight," says Abby Murtagh, F&B Director at the 65-acre resort, "but candles constantly get blown out by the wind." The solution, she says, is rechargeable LED candles from Smart Candle. "They are wonderful because they're wind-proof," Murtagh says. "The time savings alone are substantial, as employees no longer have to repeatedly stop to re-light candles."



Smart Candle's technology generates a long-lasting light that simulates a flickering candle flame. The initial investment in the battery-operated candles is quickly made up by the savings on fuel, Murtagh explains.

Miguel Reynoso, manager of the resort's Kamuela Provision Company restaurant, known for its daily sunset celebration, has recently increased his Smart Candle usage. "They're on every tabletop, both indoors and outdoors," Reynoso says. "Durable and safe, they're easier to maintain than the fuel cells," and that's one less worry for this busy manager.

"Environmental awareness is a high priority at Waikoloa," Murtagh adds. As Reynoso explains, the eco-friendly Smart Candle products help them meet those sustainability goals. "The fuel cells we used cannot be recycled. With Smart Candle, we use less energy while also decreasing pollution." —JT

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