

The Magazine for Hospitality Food & Beverage Professionals

Hotel F&B Executive

MAY/JUNE 2004



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ROBUST BREAKFAST *A FITTING TREND*

Chef Richard Thompson
Henley Park Hotel,
Washington, D.C.



Release your inner bartender! Enter the 2004 MIXIE Awards Hotel Cocktail Competition p.38-39

Hotel
wine + spirits

Wine Strategies

MARRIOTT

Fred Tibbitts, our globetrotting wine guy, talks wine with Brian Yost, VP Beverage, Marriott International.

What significant wine trends do you see now that are influencing the structure of your wine program for 2004 and beyond?

It used to be "Badge Quality" was finding the most expensive wines to consume, but today it is finding great values. Our guests are looking for quality wines from a variety of growing areas, some traditional and some nontraditional, made with grapes such as Tempranillo and Viognier. The Cabernets from Chile are a very good value. Australian Shiraz is hot as is California Pinot Noir and New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. Our guests have far greater expectations than ever before; they know much more about wine. We must constantly work to further educate service staff.

Do you think in terms of "New World" and "Old World" wines? If so, how important are the New and Old to your customers?

"New World" and "Old World" are industry labels; I've never heard a guest use them. Our guests speak about appellations, wine producing countries, points of origin, and wine styles.

What were the most successful food and wine promotions you ran in 2003, and what do you have planned for 2004?

In 2003 we ran four global promotions, all successful. We did a spring Mediterranean promotion featuring the wines of France, Italy, and Spain. We had 368 hotels participate. Our summer beverage promotion featured specialty drinks and lighter wines. We had 451 hotels participate. Our fall promotion was about alternative cuts of beef and hearty red wines as well as selected white wines. We had 427 hotels participate. We finished the year with a winter beverage promotion, featuring vodkas and red wines, and had over 300 global hotels participate. For 2004 we will run two restaurant promotions and two beverage promotions.

How do you ensure that your waitstaff and bar and restaurant managers are trained to maximize the success of your wine program? Do you outsource this important function?

We train our service staff several ways, including using "The Marriott Complete Guide to Beverage." This covers product knowledge, sales and service, and current portfolio information and is taught to all our F&B associates. We use WineQuest, which provides standard wine sales training, list management tools, and web-based beverage certification.

Do you set the standards for wine preservation, or is each hotel responsible for deciding how best to preserve their wines-by-the-glass selection? What in your opinion are the most sophisticated wine preservation systems (or system)?

We don't set standards for wine preservation because our hundreds of hotels have such differing needs based on their number of outlets and the number of wines they offer by the glass. Instead, we recommend three systems for their use: the Le Verre de Vin, which is the most sophisticated system available as well as the most expensive; Private Reserve, which combines three gases and would be a middle-of-the-road approach; and finally the Vacuvin, which consists of a hand pump and rubber stoppers to provide minimum protection for the most basic situations.

What are your favorite wines and why?

My favorite red wines are most any Cabernet Sauvignons from the Rutherford appellation, while my favorite white wines are Sancerre. ●

Fred Tibbitts, senior vice president, Fred Tibbitts & Associates, Inc., is the foremost global wine-by-the-glass consultant, working with on-premise chains around the world.



Fred Tibbitts



Brian Yost

WINE-BASED COCKTAILS COMING?

At the Olive Garden restaurant chain's annual Wine Category Management Meeting, vendors met with company marketers to discuss the future. In a savvy spirit of partnership, Olive Garden revealed its goals, growth opportunities and areas of improvement with its winery partners. In turn, winery vendors shared the latest industry trends, pricing and marketing ideas and other valuable suggestions.

Greg Rees, director of beverage marketing for Olive Garden, describes how Trincherro Family Estates Winery responded at the company's recent event: "They always do a great job. They think outside the box, give us interesting tactics and different ways of presenting wines. What's neat is they are not strictly selling their own product but recommend wines that aren't theirs if they believe it benefits our overall wine list."

Bill Barry, VP of hospitality and foodservice for Trincherro Family Estates, says his company has built a skilled marketing department that supports their customers with innovative data, analysis, and growth recommendations.

The most innovative idea presented by Trincherro to Olive Garden? "Wine-based cocktails," says Rees. "They created recipes and held a tasting. Most people think Sangria when they think about wine drinks. Trincherro's idea helps grow the entire wine category."

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Tasting at the Olive Garden's annual Wine Category Management Meeting.

FLAVOR FIRST

Your hotel should be the social center of your immediate area and food and beverage should be the social center of your hotel," says Erich Steinbock, vice president for the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company. "There is a direct connection between guest satisfaction with the restaurant and satisfaction with the hotel."

Wine plays a key role in guest satisfaction at Ritz-Carlton hotels. "We make it simple for our guests to find a wine they will enjoy at a price they are comfortable with," Steinbock adds.

In cooperation with WineQuest, a strategic marketing company, he has established a progressive wine list that presents wines by flavor, rather than by grape or region.

White, light, and fruity include Chardonnay, Pinot Grigio, Viognier, and Reisling, for instance, starting with the lightest and proceeding to the oakiest. Light Reds might include Beaujolais, light Merlots, and Pinot Noirs. Medium-body reds include Merlots, Cabernet Sauvignons, and Bordeaux style blends.

"Wines are not listed in price order," says Steinbock. "Right after a \$25 wine there can be one for \$65 or more. In every grouping I always include well-known wines as anchors. Cabernet Sauvignons from Robert Mondavi and Jordan, La Crema Pinot Noir, Sonoma Cutrer Chardonnay, and Robert Mondavi Fume Blanc are wines guests know and look for. The more adventurous often try other wines new to them because positioning near these anchor wines reassures them as to what flavor to expect."

WineQuest has over 8,000 wines in its database, all ranked by flavor. Additional wines can easily be merged into these flavor groupings, allowing complete flexibility for beverage directors and also offering an opportunity to highlight slow-moving wines by positioning them near anchor wines.

For information about the WineQuest programs, including simplified staff training, visit www.winequest.com.—Dave Steadman

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—Erich Steinbock