**Department:** Food and Beverage

**Date:** June 2019

**Applies to:** All Service Team Members

**Criteria:** Bottle Wine Service

**Purpose:** To ensure proper presentation and sequence of bottled wine.

As the guest is seated for lunch and dinner, the Hostess/Server will provide the guest with a copy of our wine/beverage list, along with appropriate menus. As we are in a wine region, you will be expected to know at least 5 red, white and two rosé wines by the bottle as well as being able to recite at least 4 wine by the glass (BTG) options.

Guests tastes in wine varies from guest to guest. What you like, a guest may not like, and vice-versa. Traditionally, the rule is white wine is ordered with white meats, red wines with red meats and cheese. In today’s day and age, traditions, flavors, habits change from consumer to consumer. If a guest wishes to have a white wine with a beef steak, or a glass of red wine with shrimp, then so be it. You like what you like. We can guide guests to have a more heightened experience but if they are set on ordering something in particular, then we will accommodate them and their wishes.

**ORDERING A BOTTLE**

The process begins when a customer orders a particular bottle of wine for the table. Make sure you heard them correctly by repeating the selection back to them. If you don't understand which bottle they are requesting, ask them to point it out on the menu.

Also remember to verify the age of guests consuming wine. If they look younger than 30 years of age, please do verify their ID.

**BRINGING WINE AND GLASSES**

The bottle of wine ordered by the guest **should NEVER be opened prior to service**, nor should any labels or foils be removed. Bring a glass for each diner. They will signal you when you are pouring out the wine if they do not want any.

Check the appropriate wine glasses for cleanliness. The wine glasses should be SPOTLESS. If they are not, swap them out. A helpful hint: use a coffee filter to polish the glasses dry...coffee filters leave less lint than bar rags or paper towels.

If the customer orders white, rosé or sparkling/Champagne, make sure you have a wine bucket with ice in it (2/3’s ice, 1/3 cold water). Don’t put the bottle in the bucket yet…you don’t want the label to be wet.

Present the bottle of wine to the guest who ordered the wine by:

* Holding the bottle by the neck of the bottle and supporting the bottom of the bottle with your other hand
* Present the label/etiquette to the guest who ordered the bottle and allow the guest to verify and verbally indicate the wine “2017 Airlie Estate Pinot Noir”
* For white, rosé and sparkling wine you will need an ice bucket stand and a service towel. Do not place the ice bucket with wine on the table. When and were possible, always use a stand.
  + For red wines, no ice buckets are needed
* Upon verification, place the white/rosé and sparkling wine in the ice bucket and proceed to open the bottle
  + For red wine, if possible, do not use the guest table to open the bottle. You will have to open it while holding it in the air. If unsure, go to an unoccupied table and open.

**UNCORKING THE WINE**

If opening a white/ rosé or sparkling wine, place the wine in the ice bucket and proceed to open it.

Using the blade on your wine key to cut the foil top, remove the foil top in your pocket or bucket. Never

on the table.

Remove the cork with your wine key and put it wet side up, on the table, in front of the person who ordered the wine. A double knuckle wine key can make the process easier.

**TWO THINGS TO REMEMBER:**

Never put the bottle on the table. You must learn how to open a bottle in the air, not on a flat surface. Practice at home. You can also ask the bartender or wine steward if you can practice before the dinner shift by opening bottles of house wine. We are here to help.

Keep the label pointing the person who ordered the wine the whole time you are uncorking the wine. Again, this takes practice.

***TIP: Make sure you check the type of closure the wine bottle has. Wine bottles are closed now with corks, zorks, and twist off bottle tops. Nothing says "inexperienced" like a waiter putting a corkscrew into a metal twist off cap!***

Once the bottle is open, pour a small amount in the glass of the person who ordered the wine. Do not touch the wine glass with the bottle while pouring. The person will try the wine (this can involve looking at the color, swirling it, smelling it, and sipping it). They will then either nod their approval or tell you there is something wrong with it. If the guest says there is something wrong with the wine or that it is “corked”, ***do not continue serving the wine – and do not disagree with the guest***. Stop, remove the wine from service (bring it to the bar and let the bartender/other servers/manager know. Remove and replace the used wine glass and obtain another bottle of the same wine.

After approval, the wine will be poured clockwise to the right, ladies first. The host's glass will be topped last. Make sure you don't pour too much wine in the first few glasses...you need to pour the same amount for each diner.

**HINT**: Using a linen napkin during wine service is helpful. With the linen wrapped loosely around the bottle while pouring you can wipe away any errant drips before they spoil the tablecloth or tabletop.

After pouring, you may leave the red wine on the table with the label facing the host. If it’s a white wine/rosé or sparkling wine, place it in the wine bucket.

Also, it is your responsibility to return to the table and refill glasses.

**NOTE:**  *Some white wine drinkers prefer to keep their wine room temperature and do not require an ice bucket. Also, some customers prefer to refill their own glasses. They will let you know if that is the case.*

**HOLDING MULTIPLE GLASSES**

When you’re carrying multiple wine glasses, turn your hand palm up and slip the glasses (upside down) in between your fingers, so that the bulbs are hanging down below your hand and the base of the glass is resting on your palm. Layer the glass bases in your hand so that each base is either touching your fingers or interlaced with other bases. You should be able to carry at least four glasses this way. Be aware to not “clang” the glasses or stuff 12 glasses at a time in your hand. Use a tray if needed.

**DECANTING A WINE**

Often an object of intimidation, a decanter is an important and rewarding tool. When done correctly, decanting a wine can elevate even the most average wine experience.

However, it’s not always easy to know whether or not to decant. You need consider the changes being triggered by the process, along with keeping a few guidelines in mind.

There are two main reasons for decanting wine.

* The first is physical—to separate clarified wine from solids that have formed during aging.
* The second is the effect of oxygen, which releases certain compounds bound within the bottle

Both have an effect on our perception of flavor, texture and aroma. Contrary to popular belief, decanting

older wines is far from an ironclad rule.

**DECANTING FOR SEDIMENT**

Separating clarified wine from the solids suspended in the bottle was the original motivation behind decanting wine.

“Decanting goes back to alchemy, where it was used to describe the process of removing the liquid part of

a mixture from the solids,” says Sacks.

Sediment can be very fine and has a tendency to deaden flavor and expression. Sometimes a winemaker will choose to bottle something with residual sediment, but most traditionalists balk at any kind of haze or cloudiness. In the holistic act of appreciating wine, visual irregularities are bound to make a mark on how we first perceive a wine.

**BEFORE YOU DECANT**

Before you can even make the call to decant, you need to prepare the wine itself.

If you’re pulling a wine from horizontal cellar storage, you ideally want to give the bottle a couple days to sit vertically so the sediment has time to shift to the bottom without being incorporated into the wine.

The important thing with a red wine is to make sure that the sediment stays at the bottom of the bottle, so

you can stop decanting when you get sediment coming into the neck.

If you’re pulling a wine from horizontal cellar storage, you ideally want to give the bottle a couple days to sit vertically so the sediment has time to shift to the bottom without being incorporated into the wine. Even just a couple of hours is better than nothing.

This also makes it unwise to serve an aged wine that was recently transported. Motion disrupts the solids in a way that can’t be corrected without an adequate resting period. If you’re going straight from cellar to table, be conscious of how the sediment shifts in the process. Tilt a bottle to vertical, stand it up in your hands very slowly so that whatever sediment is resting on that side basically slides to the bottom, and then carry the bottle standing up, making sure to not shake the bottle.

**AFTER OPENING**

Hold a candle light **BEHIND** (not directly under it) the neck of the bottle where it meets the shoulder so you can pay attention to the clarity of the wine. While tilting the bottle towards the decanter and looking through the neck at the candle, **s*lowly*** pour the wine into the decanter. Stop pouring the moment you notice sediment clouding up the wine. The amount of wine you leave in the bottle will vary depending on the amount of sediment. Preparing your bottle ahead of time will allow for the least amount of waste.

When you pour wine from bottle to decanter, air makes its way into the wine. But if your goal is to encourage the wine to “open up,” allowing it to rest after pouring can cause certain additional changes to take place.

There are a few processes happening simultaneously when wine is in the presence of air for over an hour.

Thirty minutes to an hour in a decanter can help release compounds in the wine, allowing you to reassess the wine for its other qualities.

First is the escape of volatile compounds. The two main culprits in wine are carbon dioxide and hydrogen

sulfide. Obviously recognizable in sparkling wine, carbon dioxide is also present in still whites, where unnoticed doses of the prickly, acidic gas provide extra lift to the flavor of certain white wines while bringing preservative qualities.

This is one reason we often don’t decant white wine. But in most still reds the presence of CO2 can make the wine more tannic and is usually considered a fault.

H2S, or hydrogen sulfide, is referred to as a “reduced aroma.” It pops up sometimes in red wines that have been produced under hermetic conditions and sealed with very tight closures. This is especially common with Syrah.

Thirty minutes to an hour in a decanter can help release other compounds, allowing you to reassess the wine for its other qualities. Further agitation like swirling the wine can help if you are in a rush, though this is only recommended for sturdy wines.

Exposure to oxygen leads to reactions in the wine, both good and bad, many of which will take

several hours (or days) to fully develop. It’s why a wine will initially open up pleasantly before an

eventual deadening of flavor after being exposed for too long.

Among the first things that react with oxygen are sulfur-based compounds. However, sometimes those are aromas we don’t want to lose. For example, sulfuric compounds give Sauvignon Blanc its citrusy, tropical aromas, and are easily lost to oxidative reactions. Thankfully, this isn’t as much of a concern with red wines, as many of their compounds are not as sensitive to air.

**TO DECANT OR NOT TO DECANT**

Should all old wines be decanted? Do older wines need more time to decant?

Contrary to popular belief, decanting older wines is far from an ironclad rule. Burgundy, for example, is known for its delicacy and the question of whether or not to decant is often hotly debated between experts. However, older vintages of Nebbiolo-based wines, like Barolo and Barbaresco, along with Rioja and other full-bodied wines, are generally strong candidates for decanting.

If the initial taste of a wine is promising, decanting may not be necessary. Carefully pour the wine directly from the bottle into the glass. If you do choose to decant, use a carafe with a narrow base that offers less opportunity for air to integrate and alter the wine further.

One common belief is that the older a wine is, the longer it can take to open up. However, if you notice an aroma of rotten eggs or struck match upon opening, it’s generally a sign of hydrogen sulfide, which means the bottle is “corked”. Remove the bottle, place it in the bar and get a new bottle.

Wines that are subjected to a lot of oxygen before they’re bottled tend to respond well to oxygen once the bottle is opened.