

Serving Alcohol Responsibly with ServSafe

For many restaurants, alcohol sales play an important role in boosting their bottom lines. But serving alcohol also comes with great responsibility. In most states, a restaurant and its employees can face criminal charges for serving alcohol to a minor or an intoxicated customer and can even be held liable if an intoxicated customer's actions lead to a death, injury or property damage. Here are some helpful tips based off the training concepts from the National Restaurant Association's ServSafe Alcohol program, which can help operators who shoulder this responsibility.

Take the time to talk to your guests. This will help you determine the purpose of their visit as well as their levels of intoxication. If guests are determined to become intoxicated, you want to know about it. Continue talking to each guest throughout his or her visit.

Watch for changes. You can learn a lot about your guests' level of intoxication by watching for physical and behavioral changes.

Examples include:

- Being overly friendly, unfriendly, depressed, or quiet
- Using foul language or becoming loud
- Drinking faster or switching to larger or stronger drinks
- Talking or moving slowly
- Staggering, stumbling, or bumping into objects

Watch the count. Some guests may not show physical or behavioral signs of intoxication. That's because they may have become used to the effects of alcohol. Counting drinks is important in these situations. Each of these beverages contains about the same amount of alcohol and should be counted as one drink.

**1 drink = 5 ounces of wine; 12 ounces of beer; 1 ½ ounces of 80-proof liquor
1 ounce of 100-proof liquor**

Avoid over-pouring. Over-pouring liquor when making drinks makes it difficult for guests to keep track of and control their drinking. Follow drink recipes closely to ensure that the correct amount of alcohol is put in each drink. You should measure liquor when mixing drinks. If your establishment allows you to free pour, test your accuracy periodically using a pour test.

Offer water. Drinking alcohol causes dehydration, which makes guests thirsty. This can cause them to drink more than they normally would. You can help by offering water with drinks and refilling water glasses often. This will help keep the guests hydrated and can reduce alcohol consumption.

The content in this article originally appeared in the National Restaurant Association's "Manage My Restaurant" series for operators. We know operators are always thinking about how to make their business better. Whether they are trying to drive increased traffic, learn about the latest culinary trends, recruit qualified employees or renegotiate a lease, we have you covered.

