



# Tools for Selling Colorado Wines to Restaurants

***or “I want to be in restaurants,  
but I don’t know where to start.”***

# *Why should I bother selling wine to restaurants?*

- As the old adage in wine sales says:  
***“You build your sales through restaurants to generate the demand from customers in the wine stores”.***
- California wine boom began when better restaurants around California took the chance at adding their own state’s wines to their wine lists.
- So...

# *Why should I bother selling wine to restaurants?*

- Proven to increase overall sales.
- Far more customers will be introduced to your wines than will visit the tasting room or pick up your wine from a liquor store shelf.
- This exposure spurs an interest in those wines listed and lead to more and more people making the trip to see the wineries first hand.
- In short, if you are not selling your wines to restaurants, you are not taking advantage of your best form of advertising.

**It's advertising by consumption.**

# Questions and Answers Before You Start

***I don't have time to drive to Denver and call on lots of restaurants!!!***

- OK, then start close to home.  
Work your way up to more and bigger restaurants as you have more product and feel more comfortable doing this.
- Begin by selling your wine to the neighborhood restaurant — ***you already have an inside lead there.***
- Your restaurant sales program should only be as large as
  - **your production level**
  - **your sales capabilities,**
  - **your free time** and
  - **your desire** will allow.

**Before you see any restaurant  
you need to answer  
the following questions  
for yourself and your winery:**

1. Who is the best person from our winery to be presenting our wines to on-premise accounts?
  - Send the most patient and personable member of your family or staff.
  - Whomever you send should be very well versed on the technical aspects of the grapes, the winemaking and your business.

## ...questions for yourself and your winery:

2. What wines do I feel most confident in featuring in an on-premise account?

Match the product to the account:

- Don't try to sell a wine you make specifically for the "***Winnebago crowd***" to a *white tablecloth restaurant*.
- A ticking tannin bomb will NOT sell well in a neighborhood pub.
- What wines are my best wines? for this situation?

# ...questions for yourself and your winery:

3. Which of my wines are best suited to pairing with food?
4. What kinds of food go best with my wines;  
e.g.—Cajun, Asian, burgers and pizza, beef, lamb, BBQ, etc.?
5. Which wines get the best comments from consumers in the tasting room?
  - **Don't try to sell restaurants on wines that you know need a long explanation in the tasting room.**
6. What wines do I have enough of to sell to a restaurant for the remainder of the vintage?
7. What wines travel the best without any bottle shock?
  - **Don't sell them the wines that need more time, need to rest or need anything other than to be enjoyed ASAP.**

## ...questions for yourself and your winery:

8. Should I try selling my wines to accounts that are further than 50 miles away?
9. Have I looked at all of the opportunities for accounts in my own neighborhood, town or county?
10. Do I have the time and resources to sell to restaurants on the other side of the state?
11. How difficult will it be to deliver wine to the account on a Saturday when they run out?

***Remember, that the trend today is to support locally produced products, so***

***the more local your product, the better your support.***

***Plus your friends and neighbors may be your best customers if they can buy your wine in their favorite neighborhood pub.***

## ...questions for yourself and your winery:

12. How much of my production do I want to sell to restaurants?

- You will make less profit selling any wine at wholesale than you will selling it out of your tasting room.
- The idea behind selling to a restaurant or a liquor store is to sell to a larger audience than you can out of your tasting room alone.
- Also, restaurants will demand a deeper discount on product, especially wine by the glass. You can write off that discount for restaurants as advertising—at least in your mind though not on your taxes.

## ...questions for yourself and your winery:

**Eventually, you must look at the combination of factors:**

- How much time can I afford to spend selling to restaurants?
- How many “advertising” discounts can I afford to give?
- How much product do I have?

**You should come up with a target percentage or number of cases and perhaps particular products that you will want to sell to restaurants.**

# ...questions for yourself and your winery:

**Be careful not to oversell your production,  
your time and your budget!**

13. Do I have enough product to meet the needs of a restaurant's demands?

➤ ***\*\*\* The one thing any on-premise account cannot deal with is a product they feature that runs out of stock unexpectedly. (Mountain accounts may function differently)***

➤ Know your supply before you select what wines to present

➤ Find out how much wine a restaurant expects to go through, especially when featuring your product by the glass.

➤ Set aside product to “protect” your agreement with a successful by the glass account, even if you would make more profit selling it elsewhere.

➤ ***If you think you may run out of a product before the next vintage, be up front with the restaurant and suggest they only feature your wine for limited period of time, that you know you can supply.***

## ...questions for yourself and your winery:

14. What success stories can you tell about yours or other Colorado wines?

➤ **If you are a new winery**, then rely on the successes of other Colorado wineries in restaurants.

➤ Gather as many stories, comments, anecdotes and histories from other accounts and other wineries so that you can show the skeptical buyer:

➤ **it is possible and profitable to offer Colorado wines on his or her wine list.**

*Before you chose which restaurants  
to sell to, you need to*

***“pre-qualify”***

*the restaurant and know something  
about that place.*

*Find out some information about  
that restaurant, its character or  
profile, how it does business and  
why it needs your wines.*

# What You Need to Know Before You Call on a Restaurant:

## 1. Do I know the person who will make the final decision?

- Neighborhood restaurant where you eat all the time, gives you a real head start with “pre-qualification.”
- Get to know the bartender or one of the wait staff at a new restaurant before you make your first sales call, to at least find out to whom you should be selling.
- How can I build a relationship with the decision maker **before** I try to sell them my wines?

# What You Need to Know Before You Call on a Restaurant:

## 2. What kind of restaurant is it?

- Identify the price point:
- If it is a neighborhood bar or casual bistro?
- If it is a white table cloth, fine dining restaurant,

## 3. Identify the kind of food served:

- Study the menu
- Don't avoid Asian or Mexican restaurants

A LOT OF SALES REPS DO SKIP THOSE CUISINES!

## 4. Find out if the menu changes seasonally or regularly

## 5. Do they currently offer other “Colorado” made, produced or grown food or beverage products on their menus?

- these establishments may be more receptive to CO wines

# What You Need to Know Before You Call on a Restaurant:

## 6. What is the restaurant's wine list like?

- Does it have a national or regional bias?
- Is it “mainstream” or eclectic?
- What wines of ours will fill a hole in the existing wine list?
- Do my prices fit their current wine pricing?
- Are you willing to cut your prices to get the placement?

## 7. Does the restaurant have a good by the glass program?

- How much wine by the glass is used now per month or week?
- What is the price the account currently pays for a featured wine by the glass or wine to be added to their wine list?
- Are you willing to cut your pricing to beat that in order to get the exposure and advertising afforded to wines featured by the glass?

## 8. Is the account receptive to staff trainings?

## 9. Am I willing to produce Point of Sales materials on my own to help sell my wines in the account?

*Above All:*

# **Persistence**

**Don't give up if you don't  
place your wine on your first  
attempt**

# *Presenting your wines to the account*

1. our wines “Features and Benefits”
2. ask questions that will allow you to fill in those points as you make your presentation.
3. Selling to on-premise accounts is not all about selling
4. Reasons you feel “Colorado wines” fit so many common taste profiles. Discuss the following:
  - favorable climate, soils and weather
  - our unusual ripening curve
  - higher acidities (This just makes it a better wine to go with food)
  - people like buying local

# ***Presenting your wines to the account***

5. Talk about the boom in Colorado wine sales over the past several years.
6. Don't be afraid to suggest competitors' wines

## ***Questions to help you along in your Presentation:***

- Do you currently offer any Colorado wines?
- Have you ever tasted any Colorado wines?
- How do you view Colorado's wines overall?
- What are the average prices of the wines that sell the best for you currently?

## *More Questions to help you along in your Presentation:*

- What wines are currently your best sellers and why?
- Are you featuring any other Colorado made products?
- Do all of the wines you offer sell through successfully?
- Are you currently selling more red or white wines?
- If I could show you that the quality of our wines are equal to, or better than, others already on your list would you consider placing one of our wines in your business?  
(Be willing to purchase a wine and do a blind tasting.)

## *More Questions to help you along in your Presentation:*

- Would you consider a staff training covering both our wines and Colorado wines in general?  
(Wine Board staff and committee are available for this.)
- How often do you change your wine selections?
- Wouldn't you agree that both local and out of town guests might have an interest in trying locally produced wines?  
(Tourists come to experience what makes CO unique.)
- When would it be best to start selling the wines we have discussed?

# Responses to Common Objections to CO wines:

## Colorado wines aren't very good

- We have won all these awards? (Bring a list)
- The Rocky Mountain News, USA Today and 5280 Magazine don't agree (bring copies of these articles from [www.coloradowine.com](http://www.coloradowine.com))
- The wines are featured very successfully at (name a restaurant of similar price range and caliber)

## Colorado wines are too expensive

- In blind tastings, we find our wines often fare better than California wines in the same price range.
- May I purchase a bottle of California wine from your list and do that blind tasting for you right now?
- Have you ever tried selling a local wine at this price point?
- Market surveys have shown that consumers are willing to pay a premium for local products. Similar studies by Colorado Proud confirm that.

# Responses to Common Objections to CO wines:

## Colorado wines don't sell

- Do all your wines sell through successfully?
- Have you offered Colorado wines recently?
- Mention results of the Denver Independent Network of Restaurants and their results during Harvest Celebration last September.

## Would you be willing to let me do a staff training and tasting on my wines, so the staff can sell them more effectively?

- Would you be willing for me to come by on a Friday or Saturday night to sample your guests on my wines?
- Would it help if I provided you with some point of sale materials?

## Colorado wines are hard to get

- I can set aside a certain number of cases for a particular time so you are assured of getting what you need.  
(This is not asking for a commitment.)

# *Getting help from the Colorado Wine Board*

- CWIDB has formed a committee made up of individuals with a combined 150+ years of selling wines to restaurants.
- We offer Colorado wineries the opportunity to talk to one of the Restaurant Committee's members personally to better assist you in preparing and presenting your wines to your potential accounts.
- We urge you to contact the Wine Board's office (720.304.3406) to arrange a one-on-one coaching to help you or answer your questions.