

Buying Wine To Suit Your Needs

To help club managers stimulate their beverage revenue, GOLFDOM draws on the experience of some of New York's leading wine merchants and restaurateurs for merchandising tips and the "best buys" on a wide variety of American and imported wines

by STEPHEN W. BYERS

Even in this inflation-plagued year when restaurateurs' scratching for profit items have borne little else than broken nails, it's still possible for club managers to claw out a winning year in the dining room. One way is to apply enlightened buying and merchandising techniques to the sale of wines and the other convivial beverages, on which the profit margin is between 100 and 300 per cent.

In spite of the retarding effects of the dollar devaluation and surging grape harvesting costs, wine—the medicinal drink prescribed by Hippocrates and celebrated through the centuries in aphorism, poetry

and prose by such as Euripides, Shakespeare and Thomas Jefferson—has become a modern, burgeoning and competitive industry on which the smart money in the restaurant business is counting to help check its current slump.

Club managers, when evaluating this year's budget and what changes or additions would be appropriate for their dining room fare, should consider the following facts: Americans have almost doubled their wine consumption this year; the growth in wine drinking is outpacing that of hard liquor and beer, albeit Americans spent 10 times as much on those beverages com-



bined as on wine. Young people have become particularly avid imbibers (although of the very cheapest varieties). Wine clubs, tasting groups and college wine courses are multiplying as fast as yeast on freshly squeezed grapes, with tastings taking their place alongside cocktail parties in American folkways. Wine books have been popping off the presses at the rate of 50 a year over the last three years. Modern physicians are updating St. Paul's advice to Timothy, "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine oft infirmities." They are avidly prescribing wine to help lower blood cholesterol, ease glaucoma and lessen nervous tension. Some doctors have even recommended wine in weight-reducing diets. A four-ounce glass of red, white or rosé wine contains just under 100 calories.

Increased United States interest in wine is evidence that Americans have indeed grown in ease and worldliness, as European travel and rising affluence open horizons from what a few years back was termed by some of the country's most sophisticated hedonists as "the down home culture."

American wines are no longer considered as pale imitations of their European cousins. Domestic wines are fast gaining in quality and respect in America at least, with 90 per cent of all wines sold here coming from native grapes. The 20 per cent devaluation and other factors, which contributed to the over 60 per cent increase in the cost of foreign imports have hastened the growth of American wine popularity. Costs of American wines have also increased 20 per cent (but not proportionately with imports) due to increased demand on inadequate reserves of the "noble grape" and rising labor costs.

The short of it is that advertisers are having less and less trouble convincing Americans of the truth in the Roman proverb: "A meal without wine is like a day without sunshine."

For those club managers whose wine sales do not reflect the above trends, here are some tips on how to hype your wine sales—on which your profit is about 100 per cent compared to the slim profit margin

on food dishes.

Construct an attractive wine rack in the dining room, which is conspicuous from most of the tables. This is not only a smart decorative device, but also serves as an inducement for customers to consider wine in ordering dinner. If this is done it should be elaborate and in good taste. A tacky looking wine display is worse than nothing at all.

Include with each table setting, an attractive wine glass on the right of the water goblet. Although it's preferable to use the appropriate style glass for different types of wines, the three-inch stem, high tulip crystal will serve all but Champagne. The wine glass on the table is a way of saying, "Of course you'll be having wine."

Waiters should be thoroughly briefed on customary serving procedures and should mention to customers any praiseworthy wines in stock. Though some diners might think it an imposition, most people feel observance of the established ritual in serving wine, such as decanting certain Bordeaux over a candle, offering the cork to the customer to see if the wine is soured, offering the taster's ounce to the person who ordered for the table, suggesting that certain wines be allowed to breathe a few minutes before serving and after decanting, offering to aid the customer in making his wine choice without condescension—all help make a memorable dinner (they might otherwise go into the city to find).

A way to stimulate wine sales during the lunch hour is to offer a week's special on a good light table wine. You will find that many people prefer wine to a cocktail in the middle of the day particularly if business is being conducted over lunch.

Several clubs on Long Island have had success with weekend wine tasting. This tends to attract the members to the club on Saturday or Sunday and provides an opportunity to educate the wine novice, thus making him (hopefully) a wine enthusiast, and helps the club manager determine the wine preferences of his membership to aid him in his buying practices.

The manager should always provide an updated list of wines cur-

rently in stock. It is nonsense and bad business to have a customer study an outdated list, and after making his choice, find the wine is not available.

It would not be an unduly blatant technique for the club manager to send out mailings on which the member is requested to indicate his interest in wines and his wine preferences.

It would be advisable for managers who are assured of a continuing member interest in wine, to invest in a moderate, long-term wine cellar. An excellent way to increase wine profit margin is to buy wholesale, wine that will mature in a few years. Its value at maturity will be substantially greater than when it was purchased as a young wine if it is properly stored (this requires storage in a cool constant temperature, little movement of bottles and that the bottles be placed on their sides to keep the cork moist to avoid cracking, which allows air into the bottle).

Anyone interested in information on starting a wine cellar should contact Dominique Rickard, *Vintage Magazine*, 245 East 25th Street, New York, N.Y. □

BEST BUYS

DOMESTIC WINES

The following domestic wines were recommended to *GOLFDOM* by leading New York restaurant managers and wine authorities as some of America's most distinguished offerings (which also are excellent buys):

UNDER \$2.50*

From BEAULIEU, Grenache Rosé and Burgundy.

From CHRISTIAN BROTHERS, Chablis and Napa Rosé.

From GALLO, Hearty Burgundy, Chablis Blanc and Pink Chablis.

From LOUIS M. MARTINI, Gamay Rosé, Mountain Barbera and Mountain Zinfandel 1968.

From PAUL MASSON, Emerald Dry.

From WENTE BROS., Chablis and Dry Semillon.

\$2.50 TO \$4.50

continued

WINE *continued*

From ALMADEN, Gewurztraminer and Johannisberg Riesling.

From BEAULIEU, Cabernet Sauvignon 1969 and Johannisberg Riesling.

From BUENA VISTA, Gewurz Traminer and Pinot Chardonnay.

From CHRISTIAN BROTHERS, Gamay Noir, Pinot Noir and Pinot Chardonnay.

From INGLENOOK, Charbono 1969.

From CHARLES KRUG, Chenin Blanc and Gamay.

From LOUIS M. MARTINI, Pinot Noir.

From MIRASSOU, Chenin Blanc 1971, Monterey Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon 1969.

From PAUL MASSON, Sylvaner.

From ROBERT MONDAVI, Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon 1969 and Johannisberg Riesling 1971.

From WENTE BROS., Pinot Blanc and Le Blanc de Blancs.

From WINDSOR, Chardonnay.

OVER \$5

From ALMADEN, Blanc de Blancs
**All prices quoted are wholesale*

(Champagne).

From BEAULIEU, Cabernet Sauvignon Georges de Latour Private Reserve 1968.

From CHAPPELLET, Chenin Blanc 1970.

From CHARLES KRUG, Cabernet Sauvignon 1966.

From FREEMARK ABBEY, Pinot Noir 1968 and Pinot Chardonnay 1968.

IMPORTED WINES

With the aid of Dominique Rickard, wine program director of *Vintage Magazine*, GOLFDOM has compiled a list of notable imported wines, all of which we feel are appropriate to country club dining room requirements and provide exceptional values.

\$2 TO \$5 RED

From BON-VIN, Inc., Chateau Milon Pauillac 1970 (France) and

Chateau Bourseau Lalande-de-Pomerol 1970 (France).

From BROWNE VINTNERS, Chateau de Pizay Morgon 1970 (France).

From CRISPIN WINES, Cotes du Rhone St. Didier N.V. (France).

From EXCELSIOR, Chateau Gaudin 1970 (France).

From INTERNATIONAL VINTAGE WINES, Hajosi Cabernet 1969 (Hungary).

From KOBRAND CORP., Ginestet Cabernet Sauvignon 1970 (France).

From WILDMAN & SONS, Barolo Giri 1966 (Italy); Chateau Jonqueyres Bordeaux Superieur 1970 (France) and Chateau La Tour du Pas St. Georges St. Emilion 1969 (France).

WHITE/ROSÉ

From BRIONES, Rikat Spatlese 1968 (Bulgaria).

From CRISPIN WINES, Pradel Cotes de Provence Rosé (France).

From KOBRAND CORP., Jadot Beaujolais Blanc 1970 (France) and Madrigal Bernkasteler Riesling 1971 (Germany).

From WILDMAN & SONS, Louis La-tour Auxey-Duresses 1970 (France).

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market. Egg prices also will reflect the killing of chicks. Turkey production is off because of higher production costs, and it will be some months before supplies can be replenished. The same goes for other poultry, especially ducks.

Milk production was off 2 per cent in the first half of 1973 and was expected to be off again as much in the last half of the year. Many milk cows were sent to slaughter to take advantage of high beef prices and to avoid paying higher prices for feed.

The fresh fruit and vegetable market is much more cyclical and, of course, more sensitive to weather conditions. The disastrous lettuce crop on the West Coast in 1973 may not be repeated in 1974, if the weather is good. The summer of 1973 saw many producers holding back fresh fruits and vegetables from commercial markets because of price controls. Next year, this may not be a problem and supplies are likely to be adequate. Meanwhile, experts say it may be necessary simply to hold down use of those varieties of fresh

fruits and vegetables hardest to obtain locally.

Canned goods pose another problem. Canning costs in the last year or two have risen sharply. During the past summer, some canners held back on purchases of fruits and vegetables because they could not pass costs on to consumers. Other canners went ahead with purchases, gambling that when food cost controls were lifted, they could sell them at higher prices. All told, this means that some varieties of fruits and vegetables in some markets may be short while others are plentiful.

There seems to be no letup in soaring wine prices. French and German wines, especially those of highest quality, cost more for two reasons: Customer demand around the world is growing much faster than supply, and in the United States foreign wines cost more because the devalued dollar does not buy as much of foreign products as a few years ago. This higher cost of foreign wines can be passed on to customers and normally is.

In addition, wine grape prices in

the United States are rising rapidly, and experts doubt they will slow down in the next year or so despite vast new plantings of wine grapes.

The costs of menus also are on the rise, because paper costs have gone up. Efforts by managers to keep from printing any more than a minimum number of menus and changing them as seldom as possible probably will pay off.

Another hidden worry is the soaring wool and cotton prices. Apparel costs are apt to rise substantially in the coming year. If you supply uniforms for your employees, you probably will see the changes soon. If you rent, prepare for higher costs passed on by these supply firms.

It all adds up to one simple, disastrous fact. The cost of everything seems to be going up some more during 1974. About all the experts can advise is to keep an eye out for occasional bargains, but rely mostly on balancing menus between some customers demands for luxury at any cost and the limited budgets of those suffering from their own excessive food bills at home. □