



WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE ADVANCED SOMMELIER

PRACTICAL EXAMINATION

Business of the Sommelier

The Practical Exam consists of two portions: Business of the Sommelier and Hospitality and Service. The Business of the Sommelier Exam will be the first portion of the examination.

Business of the Sommelier: Purpose and Content

- The Business of the Sommelier Exam is a set of exercises used to illustrate a candidate's proficiency in:
 - Beverage alcohol program management
 - Qualitative assessment of for pricing, theme, and style
 - Marketing and sales techniques
 - Purchasing
 - Costing
 - Audits
 - List management
 - Inventory management
 - Staff management and training
 - Beverage equipment management
- The Business of the Sommelier Exam has multiple exercises that include, but are not limited to:
 - **Tasting and evaluating beverage alcohol**
 - **Costing**
 - Wine
 - Cocktails
 - Flights
 - **Inventory Management**
 - Reading and evaluating inventory sheets
 - **Beverage List Correction**
 - Correcting mistakes on a beverage list

Business of the Sommelier: Arriving to the Exam

- Candidates will gather in a designated area with other candidates sitting at the same time.
- You will be reminded not to speak about the examination as to allow everyone the space to focus in their own way.
- A Master Sommelier will call your name along with the small group of other candidates and bring you to the Business of the Sommelier Exam Room.
- Approximately four Master Sommeliers will be in the room as proctors. We will introduce ourselves!
- You will be given specific exam related instructions and be asked not to turn over papers until directed.

Business of the Sommelier: Timing

- The Business of the Sommelier exam is a timed, 50-minute exam.
- The following time markers will be announced: “Half Time,” “Ten Minutes,” “Two Minutes,” and then, “Pens Down”.

Business of the Sommelier: Exam Set Up

- When you walk into the exam room, each candidate will have the following items at their place setting.
 - **Tasting Mat**
 - **Examination Papers:**
 - **Answer Sheet:** where you write **ALL** of your answers
 - **Inventory Sheet:** for reference
 - **Beverage List:** for reference
 - **Beverage List Correction Sheet**
 - Water
 - Spit cup
 - Pen
 - Calculator
 - Dump bucket

Business of the Sommelier: Helpful Hints

- Pace yourself appropriately so that you give yourself the chance to answer all of the questions.
- Read the questions and situations carefully and thoroughly.
- Fully taste all beverages as requested.
- Keep your answers as specific and thorough as possible knowing that NONE of the questions require long answers.
- There are no negative points for getting a question wrong. We suggest you write something regardless of your confidence level in your answer.
- Costing: You have a calculator at your disposal.
- Beverage Alcohol List Correction
 - There is a beverage alcohol list with lots of mistakes, big and small.
- Paperwork:
 - Please put your name on every paper we hand you.
 - When we pass out papers, please do not turn them over.
 - Write clearly.



WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE ADVANCED SOMMELIER

PRACTICAL EXAM

Hospitality & Service

The Practical Exam consists of two portions: Business of the Sommelier and Hospitality and Service. The Hospitality & Service will be the second portion of the exam immediately following Business of the Sommelier.

Hospitality & Service: Transition from Business of the Sommelier to the Preparation Room

- Once you are finished with the Business of the Sommelier Exam, a Master Sommelier will escort your group to the Hospitality & Service Preparation area.
- There will be a restroom break as needed.

Hospitality & Service: What to expect at the Hospitality & Service Preparatory Area

- All personal belongings will be put to the side in a secure area at this time.
- Have your Hospitality & Service equipment ready.
- Each candidate will be assigned a review table to sit at.
- There will be approximately 15-20 minutes for preparatory review.

Hospitality & Service: What to expect at the Hospitality & Service Preparatory Area

continued.....

- This preparation time is to give candidates the opportunity to:
 - Study important information needed to complete Hospitality & Service tasks.
 - This includes reviewing and being made aware of:
 - The specific situation(s) and guest notes
 - À la Carte and/or Tasting Menus
 - Wine List
 - Beverage Alcohol List
 - Please do not write on any of the menus.
 - Take any notes you wish to on your pad of paper to familiarize yourself with their content and guest notes.
 - The menus you are reviewing will be at the guests' tables and/or sommelier side station for you to reference as needed.
 - All stemware and general tools are assumed to be clean and polished.
 - Besides cocktails, all beverages are poured tableside unless otherwise directed.
- At the end of 15 minutes, candidates will be asked to turn their menus over and wait for the Maître d' to arrive
- Candidates will be given a short window to study either the menus OR their notes while waiting between tables.

Hospitality & Service: What to expect after the preparation time, entrance into the Service and Hospitality Exam Room and the Role of the Maître d'.

- Upon completion of this preparation time, you will enter the exam room in assigned panels with your Maître d'.
- There are two tables per panel
- The Maître d':
 - Will direct you to the table you will be serving for each round.
 - The Maîtres d' are there as physical and moral support.
 - They cannot answer any content questions or perform/advise on any service standards.
 - If you have any questions about location of service tools, please ask them.
 - Let them know if you need a glass of water at any time.
 - Listen closely to their instructions! You may get additional instructions and guest notes from them during Hospitality & Service. Write these instructions down on your notepad if needed.

Hospitality & Service: What to expect during the exam.

- **Resources:** Please refer to the Service Standards guide located in the resources section of the CMS-A website: [CMS-A Service Standards](#)
- REMEMBER! This is a timed exercise.
 - Please consider the exam a very busy, but manageable, evening on the floor.
 - You will be given plenty of time to complete your exercises, but you must be economical in your movements.
 - Follow your table's instructions and remember the notes and directions from the preparation time and from the Maître d'.
 - You may hear "HALF TIME" AND "TWO MINUTES" – that is for the Examiners' instruction; do not concern yourself with these announcements.
- Basic rules:
 - Once you are in the exam room, please do not prepare for or approach either of the tables until we say, "Candidates, approach your tables."
 - Focus on your own station only. Candidates will be asked to face a wall if you finish your first table early to not have unfair advantage for the second table.
 - Stay in your station area and approach tables upon direction from the Maître d'.
 - When we call, "Time!," follow your table's instructions on whether or not to continue performing your task.
- This is a conceptual exercise.
 - Please act as if this is a restaurant floor and you are serving guests.
 - We ask that you suspend disbelief when using beverages which are not actually those ordered. There will be signs placed on the service prep table to identify the beverages being ordered.
 - While actual mechanics tasks mirror real restaurant time, situations may jump around or be compressed in an effort to cover a wider range of Hospitality & Service skills than the exam window allows for.
 - Advanced Sommeliers must illustrate the ability to deal with uncomfortable situations at the table. These may include some MSs portraying confrontational guests. Such situations do not reflect the CMS-A or the individuals involved; please recognize they are playing a role and reading from a script.
- If there is a "bar" at the end of a side station: please work at the end with your side (not your back) facing the guests' table.

Hospitality & Service: Once this portion is finished, your Advanced Sommelier Practical Examination has concluded.

- Congratulations - you are finished with your Advanced Sommelier Practical examination!
- Once all candidates are done with both tables, everyone will be gathered at the front of the examination room.
- Candidates will be escorted by to the Sequester Room until the end of the day (usually between 4:30 and 6 PM), at which point you will be released.
- You will be reminded to not speak about the content of the examination until you are released from the Sequester Room.
- You may bring personal items into the Sequester Room – as long as they are not electronic communication devices and/or wine study related.

Hospitality & Service: Preparation-How to prepare for Business of the Sommelier Exam and for the Hospitality & Service Exam

- Continue to learn and/or reinforce how Theory affects Hospitality & Service, and Business of the Sommelier.
 - Continue beverage program tasting exercises which enforce assessment of style, flavor, type, pricing, value within a category, appropriateness to restaurant theme, marketing, delicious tableside description, etc.
 - Continue Hospitality & Service exercises which enforce answering Theory Questions: perhaps you have the most inquisitive guests in the world?
 - Continue Business of the Sommelier exercises which require staff training of theoretical understanding – what would their quiz be? How would you teach them?
- Continue to taste the beverages – ALL kinds, not just wine that you have studied to in Theory, both blind and not. Continue to link the theory to the flavors and structure in the glass.
- Assess your strongest areas: Why do you understand some things and not others? How can you focus your energy, and leverage your strengths to lift your weaknesses as they apply to tableside hospitality and program management?
- Create a mechanics grid for Sparkling and Decanting; use it to check that you hit every standard in “mock” or “practice” sessions (w/ others or self-recorded)
- Practice CMS mechanics standards as often as possible and ask, “Why does this standard exist?”
- Study classic regional cuisines and dishes of the world and their beverage alcohol pairings.
- Ask, “What will a guest likely want to know about a beverage?”
- Ask, “What is the Service Standard for this beverage alcohol...and, why?”